

SUICIDE AND RELIGION:

A PRELIMINARY STUDY

by

Paul W. Pretzel

A Thesis Presented to the
FACULTY OF THE
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

June 1966

This dissertation, written by

Paul W. Pretzel

*under the direction of his Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

Faculty Committee

Howard J. Clinebell, Jr.
Chairman
Edwin L. Hildebrand
James H. Thoburn
Frank W. Tomper

Date May 23, 1966

E. Mervin Twiss
Dean

NOTE FROM THE PROOFREADER

It is regrettable that the form of this thesis is not up to the high standard which is usually required for the TH. D. degree at the School of Theology at Claremont. The bibliography is incomplete, and a corrected copy was not used in checking footnotes. Although consistency is expected of our students and their typists, many points of the minutia are inconsistent. It has been expediant to submit the paper in this partially corrected form, with our apologies.

William Richard Denton, proofreader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
I. HISTORICAL CONCEPTIONS OF SUICIDE	4
The Philosophical Approach	7
The Greek philosophers	7
Philosophers of the enlightenment	13
Attitudes of the Religions	16
Judaism	18
Christianity	25
The Scientific Approach	36
The contributions of sociology	36
The contributions of psychology	43
Freud	43
Jung	55
Adler	57
Sullivan	58
Horney	59
Personal construct	60
II. THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND METHOD OF	
THIS STUDY	63
Definitions	64
Purpose of the Study	83
Research Method	85

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. CASE STUDIES	96
Nancy	96
Harry	132
Betty	153
Tom	178
Carol	206
IV. ANALYSIS OF CASES	233
Developmental History	233
Mother	233
Father	234
Peers	236
Sexual development	237
Supernatural Religion	238
Involvement in the church	238
Belief in God	239
Religion	247
Values	248
Conclusions	249
Attitudes Toward Death	249
Natural Religion	255
Religious conceptions	257
Conceptions of the universe	259
Conceptions of humanity	261

CHAPTER	PAGE
Murray	262
Tillich	267
Anxiety	273
Ontic anxiety	274
Spiritual anxiety	278
Moral anxiety	283
Conclusion	289
V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	291
VI. RELIGION AND SUICIDE	295
Responsibility and Opportunity	295
Religion as a Response	299
In time of crisis	299
In post crisis time	301
The Religious Response	310
Principles	318
The Role of the Pastoral Counselor	323
VII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	342
APPENDIX	346
BIBLIOGRAPHY	352

INTRODUCTION

When William James was in his mid-twenties, living in Europe, he suffered a severe depression during which his suicidal tendencies were strong. He was alone, depressed, in an alien country, and was struggling with the question of whether or not life was worth living. This was, for him, no academic question, but a vital one. He was deciding whether or not to kill himself.

Years later, in an address to the Harvard YMCA, speaking on the basis of this personal experience, he considered what he would say to someone who was seriously considering suicide:¹

Let me say immediately that my final appeal is to nothing more recondite than religious faith. Pessimism is a religious disease, it consists of nothing more than a religious demand to which there comes no normal religious reply.

William James was not alone in his struggle with suicide. Each year, in the United States alone, at least twenty thousand persons kill themselves. No one can count the number of suicidal attempts, but there are probably at least eight attempts for every completed suicide. Karl Menninger dramatizes the urgency of the problem:

¹William James, "Is Life Worth Living?" The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Longmans Green, 1904), p. 39.

Once every minute, or even more often, someone in the United States either kills himself or tries to kill himself with conscious intent. Sixty or seventy times every day these attempts succeed. In many instances they could have been prevented by some of the rest of us.²

Suicide is the tenth highest cause of death in our country; more deaths occur by suicide than by murder, and in Los Angeles County more people die through suicide than in traffic accidents. It would be difficult to exaggerate the seriousness of the problem.

In recent decades the subject of suicide has been receiving increased attention. We now know more about the sociology and the psychology of suicide than ever before. There is more research being conducted into different aspects of suicide than ever before. Suicide prevention activities are more intensive than at any other time. This increase in activity and knowledge has come about because certain members of the scientific community have recognized the problem as a serious one and have taken on themselves the mantle of responsibility for increased knowledge and action. The study and prevention of suicide should include the medical, psychological and sociological disciplines. But suicide is more than a scientific problem, it is a human problem, and therefore a religious

²Karl Menninger, "Foreword" in Edwin S. Schneidman and Norman Farberow (eds.) Clues to Suicide (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. vii.

problem.

When William James offered religious faith as the final answer to anyone contemplating suicide, he was not offering trite moralisms or a rigid adherence to a system of dogma. He was speaking of religious faith in terms of a "healthy ultimate relationship with the universe." He was speaking in terms of man's basic religious need for a sense of meaning, purpose, commitment in his life. He was speaking of faith in an "unseen order" in life which gives us the ability to maintain our inner stability when the evil of the world seems ready to overcome.

We consider suicide a religious problem because it involves man. We consider it a religious problem because it deals with ultimate things: life and death, good and evil, meaning and despair, and these are the time-honored concerns of religion. As a first step toward understanding the religious crisis of suicide, this empirical study of the religious orientations of certain people who seriously consider killing themselves is offered.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CONCEPTIONS OF SUICIDE

Although the subject of suicide has always deserved a high rating on any list of taboo topics, men have never been able to ignore the subject completely. Suicide is a phenomenon of life which does not disappear when it is ignored. A survey of the history of man's attempt to deal with the ever-present fact of suicidal behavior reveals that these attempts can be grouped into four basic approaches, which we shall call here the philosophic, the religious, the scientific and the preventative.

The philosophic approach to the subject of suicide attempts to incorporate the suicidal act into an overall consistent cosmology. On the basis of the specific philosophical position, suicide is frequently discussed from a judgmental viewpoint, that is, that the suicidal person does or does not have the right to kill himself, that suicidal behavior is moral or immoral, bad or good.

Historically, the religious approach to the question of suicide is similar to the philosophic approach. Based on man's opinion of the particular deity's view of suicide, the act is then either condemned as being sinful or encouraged as fulfilling some divine law. Like the philosophic approach, the religions normally view suicide

judgmentally, passing a priori judgment that it is either in accordance with, or in violation of, the divine will.

The scientific approach to the question of suicide attempts to eschew the moral question. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the scientific inquiry into suicide began with empirical studies and the accumulation of data. The intent was to gain as much information as possible in order to try to understand the circumstances surrounding suicidal behavior. There are two broad facets of this scientific endeavor, the sociological and the psychological. The former studies the social patterns and social relationships surrounding the suicidal persons in order to try to understand the social factors that contribute to suicide. The psychological approach attempts to understand the intra-psychic structure and dynamics of the suicidal person.

The preventative approach to suicide has historically been present whenever man's attempt to kill himself has been judged irrational, immoral or sinful. As we shall see in more detail in the following chapters, early philosophic and religious attempts to prevent suicide included such means as authoritarian prohibition of the right to commit suicide, condemnation of the act as sinful or immoral, threats of everlasting punishment, reprisals against the family of the suicide, abuse of the corpse of

a suicide, and compulsory forfeiture of certain legal and religious privileges and rights.

With the advent of the scientific emphasis of understanding the causes of the phenomenon, the methods of suicide prevention changed. The emphasis was now placed on improving social conditions so that some of the stresses which had been seen as encouraging suicidal behavior might be eliminated, or substantially reduced. In addition, agencies sprang into existence with the purpose of coming to the aid of the individual person who evidenced a likelihood of being suicidal. Suicide was not seen as an immoral or sinful act, but rather as a "cry for help."

The leadership in the prevention of suicide, based on the scientific approach to the problem, was assumed by Shneidman and Farberow in the establishment of the Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles, California. In this agency, and in others for which it has served as the pattern, active intervention by professional persons, who are sensitive to some of the causes of suicide, is made to answer the "cry for help" whenever it is heard.

With this introduction, we now turn to a survey of the philosophic, religious and scientific approaches to suicide.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The Greek Philosophers

To the early Greeks, death was a terrible ending to life which held beauty and promise. Death was something to be avoided until the last possible moment. Choron¹ summarizes the prevailing attitude in early Greek thought:

Death is the greatest evil. "Gods so consider it," says Sappho, "else they would die." And Anacreon is terrified by approaching death: "Death is too terrible. Frightening are the depths of Hades. There is no return."

The prevailing view of death could not appease this acute consciousness of mortality. Death was neither peaceful sleep nor the better and happier existence in the hereafter, although some held such views. Generally the dead were thought to become bloodless shadows wandering listlessly in the Underworld, which was more dreadful than anything known on earth.

This conception of death is frequently expressed in Homer as in this statement of the shadow of Achilles:²

Speak not smoothly of death, I beseech you, O famous Odysseus, Better by far to remain on earth the thrall of another . . . rather than reign sole king in the realm of bodyless phantoms.

There were other views of death present in the early Greek period, however. The Orphic brotherhoods had a different concept which found formal expression in the writings of

¹Jacques Choron, Death and Western Thought (New York: Collier, 1963), p. 32.

²Homer, Odyssey, (Great Books of the Western World; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), XI, 79.

Pythagoras. Choron summarizes this teaching:³

He taught transmigration of the soul, its purification in the wheel of births, and its final reunion with the Divine. The soul is imprisoned in the body and leaves it at death, and after a period of purification re-enters another body. This process repeats itself several times. But to make sure that with every new existence the soul should retain its purity, or become even purer and better, and thus come ever closer to the final stage where the reunion with the divine takes place, man must follow a certain discipline. Philosophy becomes with Pythagoras a way of life that assures salvation. . . .

To Pythagoras, suicide is a rebellion against the gods. It is an action that stems from perturbation, which is a pollution of the soul, and therefore an unworthy act.

Socrates takes this view into account and endorses it.⁴

The reason (against suicide) which the recet teaching (i.e., Pythagoras) gives, that man is in a kind of prison, and that he may not set himself free, nor escape from it, seems to be rather profound and not easy to fathom. But I do think, Cebe, that it is true that the Gods are our guardians, and that we men are a part of their property. . . . No man has a right to take his own life, but he must wait until God sends some necessity upon him as has now been sent upon me.

Here, then, suicide is condemned as being a presumptive act of man, a transgression on the rights of the gods. It is only when the gods themselves have made their will known as being in favor of a specific suicide that

³Choron, op. cit., p. 33.

⁴Plato, Phaedo (Great Books of the Western World; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), VII,233.

man may act in this way.

Plato, too, denies the right of suicide as a general rule but then goes on to enlarge upon the nature of the conditions under which suicide may be acceptable.⁵

And what shall he suffer who slays him who of all men, as they say, is his own best friend? I mean the suicide, who deprives himself by violence of his appointed share of life, not because the law of the state requires him, nor yet under the compulsion of some painful and inevitable misfortune which has come upon him, nor because he has had to suffer from irremediable and intolerable shame, but who from sloth or want of manliness imposes upon himself an unjust penalty. For him, what ceremonies there are to be of purification and burial God knows, and about these the next of kin should enquire of the interpreters and of the laws thereto relating, and do according to their injunctions. They who meet their death in this way shall be buried alone, and none shall be laid by their side; they shall be buried ingloriously in the borders of the twelve portions of the land, in such place as are uncultivated and nameless, and no column or inscription shall mark the place of their internment.

Following in the same tradition, Aristotle condemns suicide on the grounds that it is a cowardly act.⁶

To seek death in order to escape from poverty or the pangs of love, or from pain or sorrow, is not the act of a courageous man, but rather of a coward; for it is weakness to fly from troubles, and the suicide does not endure death because it is noble to do so, but to escape evil.

Aristotle also lays great stress on the belief that a man is fundamentally a property of the state and has no right

⁵Plato, On Laws (Great Books of the Western World; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica), VII, 753.

⁶Henry Romilly Fedden, Suicide: A Social and Historical Study (London: Peter Davies, 1938), p. 74.

to deprive the state of any of its property:⁷

Therefore the suicide commits injustice but against whom? It seems to be against the state rather than against himself; for he suffers voluntarily and nobody suffers injustice voluntarily. This is why the state exacts a penalty; suicide is punished by certain marks of dishonor, as being an offense against the state.

In the tradition of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, then, suicide is seen in negative terms as an act deserving of condemnation. This judgment, however, is not a blanket one, and there are exceptions under certain circumstances. Cicero expresses this:⁸

Where God himself has given a valid reason as He did to Socrates and . . . to Cato, and often to many others, then of a surety your true wise man will joyfully pass forthwith from the darkness here to the light beyond.

Valerius Maximum agreed with this conception, and commenting on the suicide of Cato, remarked:⁹

(Cato) gave a noble lesson to mankind. How much superior in the opinion of all honest men is dignity without life to life without dignity.

A second main tradition of Greek philosophy, that of the Epicureans, has a much softened opinion of suicide. Death, for the Epicureans, was not the terrifying subject that it was to the other Greeks:

⁷Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, Ch. XXX, par. 74, p. 87.

⁸Cicero, Tusculanarum disputationum, Book 1, Ch. XXX, par. 74, p. 87.

⁹Louis Dublin, and Bessie Bunzel, To Be or Not to Be (New York: Smith and Haas, 1933), p. 187.

So death, the most terrifying of all ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist death is not with us, but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not concern either the living or the dead, since to the former death is not, and the latter are no more.¹⁰

Man is alive to enjoy life, and when life ceases to be enjoyable, there is no reason to continue to live. Lucretius, the Epicurean poet who himself was a suicide, expressed this Epicurean point of view:¹¹

If one day, as well may happen, life grows wearisome, there only remains to pour a libation to death and oblivion. A drop of subtle poison will gently close your eyes to the sun, and waft you smiling into the eternal night whence everything comes and to which everything returns.

Perhaps the most famous quote in regard to the Epicurean view of suicide is that from Epicureus:¹²

Above all things remember that the door is open. Be not more timid than boys at play. As they, when they cease to take pleasure in their games, declare they will no longer play, so do you, when all things begin to pull upon you, retire.

For the Epicureans, then, the "door is open." Life will be lived as long as it is enjoyed, but when the hope for happiness dims, the door to death is always open.

Stoicism is the third major tradition of Greek philosophy. Suicide, for the Stoics, was permitted if the

¹⁰Epicureus, Letter to Menoecus (gratitude for these quotations, notes 10-15, is expressed to Henry Fedden.

¹¹Page 69.

¹²Page 87.

act was one of reason, will and integrity. Suicide as a result of despair was weakness and represented failure. Seneca considered old age and sickness as possible rational reasons for committing suicide:¹³

I will not relinquish old age if it leaves my better part intact. But if it begins to shake my mind, if it destroys its faculties one by one, if it leaves me not life but breath, I will depart from the putrid or tottering edifice. I will not escape by death from disease so long as it may be healed, and leaves my mind unimpaired. I will not raise my hand against myself on account of pain, for so to die is to be conquered. But if I know that I must suffer without hope of relief, I will depart, not through fear of pain itself, but because it prevents all for which I would live.

The major consideration for the Stoics was that the person be in rational control of whatever decision he makes:¹⁴

As I choose the ship in which I will sail, and the house I will inhabit, so I will choose the death by which I leave life . . . in no matter more than in death should we act according to our desire.

Suicide, as an act of cowardness, is condemned by the Stoics, but if it is executed in proper circumstance it can be an act of bravery:¹⁵

To death alone it is due that life is not a punishment, that, erect beneath the frowns of fortune, I can preserve my mind unshaken and master of itself . . . I see the rack and the scourge, and the instruments of torture adapted to every limb and to every nerve; but I also see death . . . She stands beyond my haughty fellow countrymen. Slavery loses its bitterness when by one step I can pass to liberty. Against all the injuries of life, I have the refuge of death.

Perhaps the best summary of the Stoic attitude toward

¹³Page 76.

¹⁴Page 74.

¹⁵Page 75.

suicide is given by Tillich:¹⁶

The Stoic recommendation of suicide is not directed to those who are conquered by life but to those who have conquered life and are able both to live and to die, and can choose freely between them. Suicide as an escape, dictated by fear, contradicts the Stoic courage to be.

Philosophers of the Enlightenment

Many of the same points of view that were represented in the Greek Philosophers were discovered and expressed again in the thinking of the Age of Enlightenment.

In his "essay on Suicide,"¹⁷ Hume stressed that right which everyone has to exercise his freedom of choice in deciding whether or not he shall continue to live. He refutes Aristotle's argument that every man owes it to society to remain alive, holding that a suicide does no harm to society, he merely ceases to do good. Man has the freedom and the right to dispose of his own life as he will, and this freedom is of primary concern. The purpose of this essay is to:

restore men to their native liberty by examining all the common arguments against suicide and showing that that action may be free from every imputation of guilt or shame.

¹⁶Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 12.

¹⁷David Hume, An Essay on Suicide (1789) (Ohio: Kahoe and Company, 1929).

Joining with Hume in this emphasis on human liberty to do as one will with his own life was Montaigne who reaffirms the Stoic point of view.¹⁸ Montesquieu¹⁹ also affirmed the right of suicide on the grounds that life is a blessing, and when it ceases to be desirable, one is free to give it up. Voltaire²⁰ too found the right of suicide in cases of extreme emergency to be an important right.

Kant²¹ stood on the other side of the issue, holding that all human life was sacred and must be preserved at all costs. He stressed that suicide is inconsistent with reason and inconsistent with his "categorical imperative" by which every act should be judged. The potential suicide should ask himself what would follow if everyone did what I am about to do.

Goethe²² had compassion for the suicide and expressed admiration for Emperor Otho whom he felt committed

¹⁸Montaigne, "That to Study Philosophy is to Learn to Die" (Great Books of the Western World; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica), XXV, 28.

¹⁹Charles Montesquieu, Persian Letters, Letters LXXVI, LXXVII, John Davidson (trans.) (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd).

²⁰Dublin, op. cit., p. 218.

²¹Immanuel Kant. The Metaphysics of Ethics, J. W. Semple (trans.) (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), p. 239.

²²Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Poetry and Truth, Part III, Book XIII, Vol. 11, Minna Steele Amith (trans.) (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1913), pp. 125-127.

suicide for a noble purpose. But Goethe himself felt that he would lack the courage to kill himself.

Schopenhauer²³ characteristically dwelt on the ills of life, but he discarded suicide as an answer to the problem. The suicidal person is not really desiring to reject life, he is rejecting the conditions under which he has been forced to live. He is, indeed, expressing a will to live in his rebellion against all the conditions of his life which limit his basic freedom to enjoy life.

William James,²⁴ as we have seen, rejects suicide, holding that the human task is to find a religious meaning in our individual human lives. When this religious search is taken seriously, human life becomes meaningful.

Thus have the philosophers of both ancient and modern times struggled with the question of suicide in terms of what a man has a right to do with his own life. In the same vein, the major religions of the world addressed themselves to this question and it is to a survey of their conceptions that we now turn.

²³ Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1907).

²⁴ James, "Is Life Worth Living?" op. cit.

II. ATTITUDES OF THE RELIGIONS

Just as there are numerous philosophical positions on the topic of suicide, so there is a widespread of religious belief on the subject.

Anthropologists have discovered in their study of primitive religious beliefs that suicidal practices cover a wide range from culture to culture. The Zuni¹ tribe knows of no suicidal behavior, whereas the Navaho² religious belief system includes suicide as a ritual whenever the individual has broken one of the many taboos and has brought shame to himself. Among the Navahos, suicide is often an expression of revenge. It is as if the wronged person were saying, "Look what you have done to me." When this happens, then the community expects the original wrong-doer to take his own life as a payment.

The strong belief in an after life among the Navaho is also an important factor in the high suicide rate. Servants and wives will frequently suicide after the death of a master or husband in order to continue to serve him in the hereafter. Suicide will take place in preference to any physical mutilation so that the person may enter the

¹Dublin, p. 138f.

²Ibid.

realm of death with a complete body.

Marital problems and the shame of pregnancy out of wedlock are also common causes for suicide among the Navahos.

Many of the same motivations for suicide are seen among the Oriental religions. The Buddhist³ doctrine of the living soul encourages suicidal behavior among widows who want to join their husbands in death. The act of self destruction also serves as a religious ritual among the Buddhists. Drowning in sacred rivers is a way of washing the soul clean, and burning is also a purifying act.

In China,⁴ financial insolvency, personal insult, slight offenses to sacred ancestors, and impending punishment for capital crimes are sufficient cause for one to take his own life.

In most primitive cultures where suicide is accepted as an expression of religious faith, many of the same motivations are found. Suicide is an expiation for guilt, revenge against a wrong-doer, an entrance into the after life, and a highly regarded act of religious devotion and spiritual superiority.

In Japan,⁵ for example, suicide has traditionally

³Ibid., p. 159.

⁴Ibid., p. 160.

⁵Ibid., p. 165.

been honored as an act of high courage. The graves of persons who have died from self-inflicted injury are frequently honored and turned into shrines. Hari-Kari is a suicide carried out with great courage in obedience to high principles; Junshi is another type of suicide which takes place after the death of a master; and Shinyu is the name for the double suicide of lovers who can see no happiness or honor in this life.

In strong contrast to these religious systems which include suicide as a religious ritual or approved social behavior, Islam expressly forbids it. The Koran is the only major religious scripture which explicitly renounces suicide. In the Hebrew-Christian tradition, religious attitudes in regard to suicide are more unclear and complex. We shall now examine them in more detail.

Judaism

The Jewish people, according to most available statistical data, have always enjoyed a very low suicidal rate. In speculating on the causes of this phenomenon, Dublin⁶ hypothesizes that the traditional view of the sacredness of all human life which ultimately was the property of the Creator rather than the person was an important deterrent to suicide. For example, God was so

⁶Ibid., p. 167.

angry with Onan for spilling his own seed on the ground rather than using it for procreation that he slew him (Gen. 38).

There are only four accounts of suicide in the Old Testament, and all of them are simply reported as historical facts, without any judgment being attributed to them. Abimelech directed his armor-bearer to kill him so that he would not die of a wound inflicted by a woman⁷ (Judges 9:54); Sampson⁸ died by his own hand while a captive of the Philistines in order to effect revenge against them (Judges 16:28-31); Saul⁹ fell on his own sword to avoid capture and death at the hands of the uncircumcised and his armor-bearer followed suit (1 Sam. 31:1-6); and Ahithophel¹⁰ systematically put his affairs in order and killed himself when Absalom refused to follow his advice. In this last case, the text expressly states that Ahithophel was accorded an orthodox burial (II Sam. 17:23).

Thus in Biblical times, there seems to have been no express law against suicide. The act is not prohibited in the Ten Commandments, nor is it mentioned in the other

7 Judges 9:54.

8 Judges 16:28-31.

9 I Samuel 31:1-6.

10 II Samuel 17:23.

Biblical law books. The commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," at this time was not interpreted to include suicide, and those cases of suicide mentioned in the Old Testament, as we have seen, did not receive condemnation.

In the inter-testamental period, two incidents of suicide are reported. In II Macabees 14:46, Razis takes his own life rather than be taken by his enemies; and Eleazar, a Zealot, urged his 1000 followers to kill themselves rather than be taken captive. It is said that 960 people followed his advice and his example. This mass self slaughter took place in 73 A.D.

It would appear from this that suicide, rather than capture, was being accepted as a custom of the Jewish armies. Indeed, so close was this practice to being accepted as a tradition that in the siege of Jotaphata, when things were going badly for the Hebrews, the soldiers of Josephus pleaded with him to kill himself and instruct them to do likewise. Josephus,¹¹ however, refused to accede to their pleas, and instead delivered a stirring speech. He records this portion of it:

Oh, my friends, why are you so earnest to kill yourselves? Why do you set your soul and body, which are such dear companions, at such variance? It is a brave thing to die in war, but it should be by the hands of the enemy. It is a foolish thing to do that for ourselves which we quarrel with them for doing to us. It

¹¹Dublin, p. 174.

is a brave thing to die for liberty; but still it should be in battle and by those who would take that liberty from us. He is equally a coward who will not die when he is obliged to die. What are we afraid of when we will not go up and meet the Romans? Is it death? Why then inflict it on ourselves? . . . Self murder is a crime most remote from the common nature of all animals, and an instance of impiety against God our Creator.

This eloquent speech is possibly the first expression of what has come to be accepted as the traditional Jewish view of suicide.

It is also in the writings of Josephus that we find the first indication of a suicide being refused orthodox burial. The body of one who had killed himself had to be carried to the grave after sunset, and it was buried without the usual rites. From this time on, Jewish thinking takes a firm stand against self destruction.

When Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradyon¹² was suffering martyrdom under Hadrian, he protected his mouth from the flames so that he would not hasten his own death, saying:

It is better that he who has given me my soul should take it away, rather than that I should destroy it myself.

The oral tradition of early Judaism is recorded in the Mishnah--a part of the Talmud--and was compiled in the first quarter of the second century. These words are found in the document:¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 175.

¹³Ibid., p. 176.

Whenever a person of sane mind destroys his own life, he shall not be bothered with at all.

Rabbi Ismael says:

One chants over his body a dirge with the refrain:
Woe be unto thee who hanged thyself.

Rabbi Eleazar answers:

Leave him in the clothes in which he died, honor him not, nor damn him. One does not tear one's garments on his account nor take off one's shoes, nor does one hold funeral rites for him; but one does comfort his family for that is honoring the living.

Here is expressed another fundamental position of the Jewish religion concerning suicide. That although one does not mourn or honor a suicide, neither does one judge him or abuse him. Furthermore, the survivors are comforted and helped in every way, they are not ostracized or punished. As we shall see in the next section, this is a significant difference from some early Christian practices.

As time went on, the Jewish law regarding suicide continued to be redefined. The Semachot¹⁴ is a post Talmudic treatise dealing with the rules of mourning for the dead. The complication by Rabbi Ebel Rabbati took its final form about the eighth century. In this document the term "suicide" is not used. In its place the phrase "meabed azme ladaat" is employed, which means "one who

¹⁴Ibid., p. 177.

intentionally destroys himself." The implication of the use of "destroy" in the place of "kill" carries the meaning of everlasting annihilation. The term "ladaat" means "conscious and intentional," "consent" or "free will." It includes two elements: that the act was free from any outside pressure, and that the spontaneity must be evident prior to the act. The effect of this wording was to define suicide in a very narrow way, and to allow a wide latitude in defining a death as something other than suicide.

Another definition of suicide was offered by Maimonides¹⁵ (1135-1204). A man is a suicide if he is not willing to break the dietary laws and the regulations concerning the Sabbath rather than forfeit his own life. The advice is given to run away if you can. Also permitted is the person's right to disguise his religion rather than die, but he cannot perform any overt act prohibited by the Law. This, however, appears to be a minority view and did not receive general acceptance.

The latest codes from the sixteenth century¹⁶ constitute the basis of contemporary practice of Orthodox Jews. There are three major provisions. First, suicide is described as the most wicked act. There should be neither

¹⁵Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁶Ibid.

rending of the garments nor mourning on behalf of the suicide. He should, however, be cleansed, dressed in shrouds and buried. Secondly, every effort should be made to regard the act of a possible suicide as an act of murder, not suicide. Unless there is clear and unmistakable evidence that the death was the result of an act of self destruction, the assumption shall be that the death was by result of murder. Finally, if a child should take his own life, it shall be considered that he did the act unwittingly, that it is not a suicide. This is also the interpretation applied for any adult if it was possible that the deed was prompted by madness or through fear of terrible torture. In these cases, he shall be treated as any ordinary deceased person.

The traditional Jewish viewpoint then has always been strongly against suicide, and the Jews have traditionally enjoyed a low suicide rate as compared to other religious groups. There are three elements that may account for this low rate: the Jewish concern for the sacredness of life; the clarity and severity of the law in regard to suicide; and the narrow definition of what constitutes a suicide. Other factors are also of importance, but we will postpone discussion of the sociological and psychological factors until later.

Christianity

The attitude of the Christian Church toward suicide, like the Jewish attitude, took several centuries to become formulated. Suicide was a fairly common occurrence in the first century, being endorsed as we have seen by the Stoics, Epicureans and the Cynics, yet the New Testament makes no direct comment about it. The only suicide reported in the New Testament (unless the death of Jesus is defined as a suicide) is that of Judas. Only Matthew¹⁷ reports it, and he without comment, judgment or elaboration. Some New Testament phrases appear to discourage suicide, such as Jesus' comment: "He who endureth to the end shall be saved,"¹⁸ and some of Paul's teachings, for example, "If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."¹⁹

Yet there were two types of suicidal behavior that received the approval of the Christian community in the early years. Martyrdom was deemed a worthy act, commenting as it did on the cruelty of the pagan world, the lack of fear of death, and the strength of faith. St. Cyprian²⁰ writes that true Christians did not fear death and

¹⁷ Matthew 27:3-5. ¹⁸ Matthew 10:22.

¹⁹ I Corinthians 13:3.

²⁰ Dublin, p. 198.

willingly gave their blood to escape from a cruel world. Tertullian²¹ in defense of Martyrdom cites with approval some well-known suicides including those of Lucretia, Dido and Cleopatra. Early Christian history is filled with stories of the faithful seeking out martyrdom as a sure means of eternal salvation.

The second class of suicides which were approved by the early Church community were women who took their own lives rather than lose their chastity.²² St. Pelagia, a girl of 15, jumped from a roof to her death to escape a Roman soldier and was canonized for her act. St. Ambrose said of her:

God was not offended by such a remedy, and faith exalted it.

Two other examples of such suicide include the death of Domnina and her two daughters who accepted drowning in preference to loss of chastity, and Belsilla, a twenty year old nun who abused herself until she died and in so doing received the approval of Jerome.

The first clear statements against suicide in the Christian tradition came from the pen of St. Augustine who in the City of God²³ supported the view that suicide is never justified. He supports his opinion on the basis

²¹Ibid., p. 199.

²²Ibid., p. 200.

²³Augustine, City of God.

of four reasons. First, the Christian is never without hope as long as the possibility of repentance remains alive, but with suicide the possibility of repentance is gone. Secondly, suicide is homicide, and this is a forbidden act. Thirdly, there is no sin that is worthy of death. The Christian is not his own judge, for this is a prerogative of God alone. Finally, suicide is the greater sin of any choice. The Christian is better advised to make any choice other than that of killing himself, for he will be guilty of a lesser sin, and still be alive to repent.

St. Augustine had to modify his position to some extent, since the Church had already canonized some suicides such as that of St. Pelagia. Augustine handles this by assuming that Pelagia had received a special Divine revelation which sanctioned her act, but this was an exceptional case and did not invalidate Augustine's reasoning.

St. Augustine's view prevailed in the Church, and by the fifth century suicide was deemed an ecclesiastical crime by order of the Council of Arles in 452²⁴. This was the first time that suicide was considered by an official Church body. In the following centuries the Church's view of suicide became more strict and punishment more intense. The Council of Orleans in 533 denied funeral

²⁴Dublin, p. 203.

rites to a suicide; the Council of Borage in 563 endorsed the prior councils action and further legislated that a suicide could not have the benefit of Mass. The Council of Auxerre in 578 again reaffirmed the stand, and the Council of Antisidor in 590 barred any gifts from suicides.

In the year 750, the fifth chapter of Penitential of Egbert, Archbishop of York denies burial to a suicide, "if they do it by the instigation of the devil." The Fiftith of Canons published in King Edgar's reign in 960 stated the same punishment "if they do it voluntarily at the instigation of the devil."

The Council of Nimes in 1284 confirmed all prior legislation and renewed the athema on suicides, and further stated that under no circumstances could a person who killed himself be buried on holy ground. No significant change has been made since this legislation. The Roman Catholic Church still demands excommunication of the suicide and the forfeiture of all ecclesiastical rights and benefits.²⁵

After Augustine, the next major theologian to consider at length the question of suicide was St. Thomas

²⁵Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X Pontificis Maximi Iussu Digestus Benedicti Papae XV Auctoritate Promulgatus. Romae, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1917. Canons 985, 1240, 1241, 2339, 2350.

Aquinas.²⁶ He called suicide a sin and a crime and based his judgment on three major points. First, everyone loves himself and therefore suicide is against nature and charity. Secondly, an act of suicide does injury to the community. This, of course, is a restatement of Aristotle. Finally, suicide is to be condemned because it assumes God's prerogative who alone has the right to give life and take it away. St. Thomas based his view of suicide on three basic Christian beliefs, the sacredness of human life, the importance of submissiveness to God, and the importance of the moment of death.

Protestantism reflects much the same attitude toward suicide as was manifest in the Roman Catholic Church. For example, in 1603 the Book of Common Prayer²⁷ of the Church of England specifically denied the right of Church burial to any "that have laid violent hands upon themselves."

The feeling against suicide ran even stronger in the minds of the people than in the writings of the theologians and Councils. Throughout much of Christian history from the fifth up to as late as the nineteenth

²⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, (Great Books of the Western World, Encyclopaedia Britannica), XX.

²⁷Book of Common Prayer.

centuries, the corpse of a suicide suffered the greatest of indignities. Not only was the suicide denied a Church burial, and denied the right to bequeath his personal property to his heirs, but the rage of the community was loosed upon the corpse. Frequently, in both England and Europe, the body was dragged through the streets face down. It then was hung on a gallows and allowed to rot there or be devoured by the birds of prey. At other times it was dumped, unburied in an open field, or perhaps buried at a crossroads with a stake driven through its heart.

Superstition and fear surrounded the body of one who had killed himself. If the death took place in a house, the body could not be carried out through a door. It had to be removed through a window, or a portion of the wall was knocked out and then replaced. In Scotland it was believed that if the body of a suicide was buried within sight of the sea or any cultivated land, it would be disastrous to fishing or agriculture.

In Europe the graves of stillborn infants, suicides and excommunicated persons were buried (if at all) "out of sanctuary," that is, on the North side of the graveyard. This custom stemmed from the fact that it is from the North side of the church where the Gospel is read to recall sinners, as compared to the South side from which

the Epistile is read to instruct the faithful.

Perhaps we can gain a sense of the feeling about suicide and its prevention as it was being expressed in the eighteenth century, through this quotation of John Wesley:²⁸

It is a melancholy consideration, that there is no country in Europe, or perhaps in the habitable world, where the horrid crime of self murder is so common as it is in England! One reason of this may be, that the English in general are more ungodly and more impatient than other nations. Indeed we have laws against it, and officers with juries are appointed to inquire into every facet of the kind. And these are to give in their verdict upon oath, whether the self-murderer was sane or insane. If he is brought in insane, he is excused, and the law does not affect him. By this means it is totally eluded; for the juries constantly bring him in insane. So the law is not of the least effect, though the farce of a trial still continues. . . .

But how can this vile abuse of the law be prevented and this execrable crime effectually discouraged? By a very easy method. We read in ancient history that, at a certain period, many of the women in Sparta murdered themselves. This fury increasing, a law was made, that the body of every woman that killed herself should be exposed, naked in the streets. The fury ceased at once. Only let a law be made and rigorously executed, that the body of every self-murderer, Lord or peasant, shall be hanged in chains, and the English fury will cease at once.

Yet even in the midst of such strong and even brutal feelings against suicide, some more moderate voices were heard pleading for temperance. John Donne,²⁹ Bishop of

²⁸ John Wesley, Works, XIII, 481.

²⁹ John Donne, Biathanatos: A Declaration of that Paradoxe or Thesis that Self-Homicide is not so Naturally a Sin that it May Never Be Otherwise. Wherein the Nature

St. Paul's in the mid-seventeenth century, wrote a book with the title of: Biathanatos: A Declaration of That Paradoxe or Thesis that Self Homicide is Not So Naturally a Sin that It may Never Be Otherwise. Wherein the Nature and the Extent of All Those Lawes Which Seeme to be Violated By This Act Are Diligently Surveyed.

Donne's thesis is that the power of God is great enough that we are in error in assuming that all suicides are irremissible sin. It was one of the first pleas for moderation and understanding. As a result of such writings, and because of the influence of such secular writers as Hume, Montaigne, Montesquier, Voltaire and others, both custom and law began to be modified.

In England, for example, the last body to be dragged through the streets and buried at a crossroads was in 1823. In July of that year, a law was passed prohibiting the practice. In 1882 the legislature ordered that a suicide may have a normal burial, and in 1870 the forfeitures were removed. In 1882 a suicide was no longer a murder but only a misdemeanor. Society was becoming more lenient and less punitive.

The evolution of the Christian view of suicide,

and the Extent of All Those Lawes Which Seem to be Violated by This Act Are Diligently Surveyed.

then, may be traced in this broad way. From a very permissive, unconcerned position in its earliest years, Christianity gradually built up an intense, punitive denunciation of suicide, and finally in the last century modified its intensity while maintaining its disapproval. Historically, the Church sought to prevent suicide by condemning it as a sin, bringing its influence on secular authority to have suicide labeled a crime, permitting or encouraging atrocities against the corpse, and by threatening eternal punishment.

How effective these means of suicide prevention were cannot be proved. It does appear, however, that during the Middle Ages the suicide rate in Europe was negligible. Dublin feels that the strong stand of the Church was influential:³⁰

. . . when we review the history of suicide during the centuries when the Church and State were inseparable, we find that religious prohibition acts as a strongly deterring influence. Bitter religious opposition, the force of condemnatory public opinion, and the severe penalties of the law were so effective that few people had the temerity to take their own lives.

Durkheim, however, explains the low suicide rate during this period in another way. The main factor was that Europe at this time was a forced integrated community, and this is the primary anti-suicidal factor. We shall have

³⁰Dublin, p. 210.

more to say about Durkheim's conceptions in a later chapter, but for now we merely note that he was pessimistic about the hope that religion, as such, can have much of an influence on the suicide rate. If religious doctrine has any effect at all, which he doubts, it is at too high a price:³¹

Religion modified the inclination to suicide only to the extent that it prevents man from thinking freely.

When a man is denied the right of free thought, when he is forced to accept a certain system of dogma, he does not have to face certain ultimate questions of his own existence, and he is spared the possibility of despair. He may be less suicidal, but according to Durkheim, he is also less a man.

There are the possibilities, then, that Christianity has exerted an anti-suicidal influence on its adherents because it authoritatively prohibited suicide, it presented an integrated community, and because it presented man with a frame of reference, a Weltanschauung in which he can live without facing existential questions.

On the other hand, there is the possibility that Christianity constitutes a suicidal incentive in that it has historically spoken in glowing terms of an after life,

³¹Emile, Durkheim, Suicide, Spaulding and Simpson (trans.), (Glencoe, Free Press, 1951), p. 375.

martyrdom has been seen as a sure way to salvation, and it has often been pessimistic about this world.

Before we conclude this chapter, we would allude to another possibility of religion as an anti-suicidal factor. Paul Louis Landsberg was a victim of Nazi persecution who had planned to suicide if captured by the Gestapo. Once captured, however, he had a religious experience which he describes with the phrase, "I have now met Christ." He destroyed the poison with which he had planned to destroy himself and lived through the concentration camp experience supported by his religious belief. He speaks of it in this way:³²

Suicide thrusts us back upon the mothers breast.
It is infantilism. On the other hand, Christ guides
us through struggle and suffering towards a brighter
life.

³²Paul Louis Landsberg, The Experience of Death
(London: Rockliff 1953).

III. THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

Unlike the philosophical or religious approach to the subject of suicide, each of which focused its consideration on evaluating the morality of suicide, the scientific approach begins with a different orientation. Through the methods of empirical investigation, Science seeks to discover the factors that are associated with suicide and on the basis of these findings to arrive at a clearer understanding of man's attempts to kill himself.

We shall consider the scientific approach to the study of suicide under the two main headings of sociology and psychology.

The Contributions of Sociology

The sociological interest in suicide began in the 19th century and concerned itself primarily with the accumulation of actuarial data and the attempts to find significant correlations between the variables.¹

¹Some of the early studies which are commonly referred to include:

Jean Esquiral, Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity, translator E. K. Hunt (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1838); Forbes Winslow, The Anatomy of Suicide (London: Renshaw, 1840); Lisle, Du Suicide, Statistique, Medicine, Histoire et Legislation (Paris: J. B. Baillere, 1856); Louis Bertrand, Traite du Suicide, Considere dans ses Rapports Avec La Philosophie, La Theologie, La Medicine, et La Jurisprudence, (Paris: J. B. Bailliere, 1857); H. Morselli, Suicide, An Essay on Comparative Moral

For the most part, the findings of these studies were comparable with one another. Dublin² summarizes the major findings, most of which were consistent with contemporary research. Statistically, men are more likely to commit suicide than women, although women are more likely to attempt suicide than are men; Caucasians more than Negroes, city dwellers more than rural; single persons more than married; divorced more than single persons; military personnel more than civilian; and those having no children tend to be more prone to suicide than people who have children. Suicides are more apt to occur during times of peace than in times of war. The suicide rate of Protestants is characteristically higher than that of Catholics, and Catholics higher than Jews.

With the publication of Durkheim's³ major work in 1897, the sociological conception of suicide underwent a major revision. Prior to Durkheim, the actuarial data

Statistics (New York: Appleton, 1882); James O'Dea, Suicide: Studies on its Philosophy, Causes and Prevention (New York: G. O. Putnam & Sons, 1882); Alfred Legoyt, Le Suicide Ancien et Moderne (Paris: A. Dronin, 1887); Samuel Strahan, Suicide and Insanity (London: Sonnenschein and Company, 1893).

²Louis Dublin and Bessie Bunzel, To Be or Not To Be (New York: Smith and Haas, 1933).

³Emile Durkheim, Le Suicide: Etude de Sociologie, trans. Spaulding and Simpson (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951).

which had been collected was being interpreted as part of an effort to isolate the conditions under which the individual might be likely to attempt suicide. Durkheim held that the true significance of the statistics is that suicide is primarily a social phenomenon and not an individual one. He defends the thesis that:

suicide which appears to be a phenomenon relating to the individual is actually explicable aetiologically with reference to the social structure and its ramifying functions.⁴

Society is something more than the sum of its parts. Any society has an existence of its own, and this existence can be studied. This study is the science of sociology.

The suicide rate of any society is a product of that society. The fact that, for example, Catholics appear to have a lower suicide rate than Protestants has little to do with the belief content of their religions, or with the attempts they make to discourage suicide by authoritarian prohibition or moral condemnation. The significant difference between them is that the Catholic Church presents a more unified, more closely integrated social community than does Protestantism, and this is the crucial factor.

Similarly, the fact of one's being married per se has little to do with the suicide potential of the person.

⁴Ibid.

But marriage is a community, and those who are married and living in a monogamous culture are closer to the social norm, and are better integrated into the wider community.

Durkheim held a negative view of the work of the demographers who preceded him. He labeled as "extra social factors" the age, sex, race, heredity of psychopathic states of suicidea persons, and held that they were of little importance. The "cosmic" factors of geography, climate and religious belief were also incidental. What is determinative is the nature of the society and the individual person's integration into that social framework.

There are three types of suicide, according to Durkheim. The "Egoistic" suicide stems from excessive individualism, wherein the person has an inadequate integration within his society. Such a person is not sufficiently dependent on his social group and is left too much to his private interests. His social ties are not meaningful to him, and he does not share the beliefs and practices of a common, intense collective life. People tend to cling longer to an unsatisfactory life if they belong to a group that is meaningful to them, and when they place a higher value on the social bonds than on their own desires and impulses.

"Altruistic" suicide is a reverse phenomenon. When a person is over-integrated into his society and completely

sub-ordinates his own desires to the will of the group, he will kill himself if and when his society demands it. We see examples of this in some religious martyrdom, in the suttee of the just-widowed Indian woman, and in certain military actions (for example, hara kiri).

The third classification of suicidal behavior which Durkheim identifies is the "Anomic." When a person is suddenly confronted by a crisis situation in which there is a "lack of social regulation" or when the "social constraints" are missing, he may not be able to handle suicidal impulses.

In times of catastrophe, when the social order is temporarily destroyed, as in the case of some natural disaster, there is no social unity, constraint or regulation, and the suicidal danger rises.

The anomic effect may also be present when the person experiences a sudden increase or decrease of wealth, or at the loss of a significant other person in his life upon whom he relied for his social definition. Whenever the nature of the person's life is dramatically changed, and his normal social relationships are lost or in a state of chaos, he may be susceptible to "anomic" suicide.

As we might expect of this early functionalist, Durkheim sees religion as important only insofar as it

serves a social purpose. This is evident in his definition of religion:⁵

Religion is the system of symbols by means of which society becomes conscious of itself; it is the characteristic way of thinking of collective existence.

Religion is useful in facilitating social cohesiveness and tends to arise in periods of collective ferment. Insofar as it serves this function, it is an anti-suicidal influence. But in modern times, religion has outgrown its usefulness. It no longer claims the respect that it once held and in our time is an anachronism:⁶

Religion, therefore, modifies the inclination to suicide only to the extent that it prevents man from thinking freely . . . In a word, we are only preserved from egoistic suicide insofar as we are socialized; but religions can socialize us only insofar as they refuse us the right of free examination. They no longer have, and probably will never again have, enough authority to wring such a sacrifice from us. We therefore cannot count on them to rear barriers to suicide.

Since Durkheim, sociology has been active in its study of suicide. Warren Breed⁷ summarizes contemporary studies of suicide in four categories. The first category has to do with the socio-cultural organization of the society and the extent of integration it displays. This is essentially an elaboration of Durkheim's position.

The second category is the study of the groups and

⁵Ibid., p. 312.

⁶Ibid., p. 375.

⁷Warren Breed, "Suicide and Loss in Social Interaction" to be published in Essays in Self Destruction.

strata within the society and the manner in which they are interrelated in cooperation, competition and conflict. This emphasis seeks to determine the manner in which the members of the society are attached to these sub-groups. The emphasis here is on demography and actuarial information.

The third area of sociological study considers the nature of interpersonal social relationships that members of the society experience in their day-to-day experiences with other people. To a large extent, our opinions of ourselves are determined by other peoples' opinions of us, or what we think their opinion of us may be. Much of our social striving is an effort to gain favorable assessment from other people with whom we have contact. When a person is experiencing "downward mobility," when he is "failing" as his society defines "failure," the assessment that he sees in the attitudes of those about him is negative. This negative assessment may be intolerable to him, and a suicidal danger may be present.

Basic to this theory is the concept of "loss" which may refer to the loss of social position and prestige (and the value judgment which society places on it), financial wealth, or the loss (through death or other means) of a loved one. This experience of loss is often found just prior to a suicide attempt.

The fourth area of contemporary study, which Breed defines, is that of the intra-psychic structure and functioning of the individual person and how he developed from childhood. This is the psychological inquiry, to which we turn in the next section. Dr. Breed points out that all four areas have a contribution to make in a comprehensive understanding of suicidal behavior.

Sociology continues its concern and its investigation of suicide with new and old approaches, but as yet it is not satisfied with its own results. Jack P. Gibbs states:⁸

After more than six decades, we still lack an adequate treatment of suicide as a social and sociological problem.

The Contributions of Psychology

Turning now to a survey of the thinking of modern psychology in regard to suicide, there is only one place to start.

Freud. Although Freud never wrote a systematic paper on the subject of suicide, the many references throughout his writings indicate that he was well aware of the problem and was concerned about it. To pour through Freud's voluminous writings and glean out the pertinent

⁸Jack Gibbs, "Suicide," eds. Merton and Nisbet, Contemporary Social Problems.

references to the dynamics of suicide is a Herculean task that has been performed for us by Robert E. Litman,⁹ and I can do no better than to refer the reader to this excellent essay. It is our intention how to present a concise summary of some of the main thoughts that Freud expressed on our subject, a summary based largely on Litman's work.

Freud was primarily a clinician. His theoretical contributions were mainly the result of efforts to organize and generalize the data of human experiences as he perceived them in his own life and in the lives of his patients. We will first mention some of the dynamics which first impressed Freud as being associated with suicidal behavior, and then we shall look at his efforts to theorize.

One of the best known of the dynamics of suicide which Freud identified is the role played by hostility--the murderous wishes and impulses which are often directed at the parents. Seen in terms of the classic Oedipal drama, the child experiences great anger and resentment against the like-sexed parent and wishes that he were dead so that the child could replace him in the mother's affections. But because these thoughts are magically

⁹Robert E. Litman, M.D., "Sigmund Freud on Suicide," Essays on Self Destruction (not yet published).

dangerous, because he fears reprisal for his aggression, and because along with this hate he wants his father's love too, the murderous wishes are repressed and sometimes turned inward upon the child himself. Freud expressed it in this way:¹⁰

We have long known it is true that no neurotic harbors thoughts of suicide which he has not turned back upon himself from murderous impulses against others.

A second clinical impression which struck Freud is that guilt is often a result of the Oedipal desire, not only in terms of the incest wish, but also concerning the murderous wish. This guilt, and subsequent need for punishment, sometimes takes a suicidal expression:¹¹

We find that impulses to suicide in a neurotic turn out regularly to be self-punishment for wishes for someone else's death.

The "someone else" may be a sibling as well as a parent.

Another clinical impression which Freud offered is the process of identification with a parent who had died when the child was at an early age.¹² Possibly the parent had suicided, and this appeared to make the suicidal danger

¹⁰Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," XIV, 247-252, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1965).

¹¹Ibid., X, 153-318, "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," (1909).

¹²This point has been stressed by Zilboorg. Gregory Zilboorg, "Suicide Among Civilized and Primitive Races," Am J Of Psych, XCII(May 1936), 1347.

especially strong. The desire to join the deceased parent took the patient to suicidal thoughts.

Still another factor was the suicidal person's inability--or unwillingness--to accept the loss of some valued libidinal object. Either from feelings of rage or a sense of abandonment, the loss of the object triggered a suicidal danger as if the person was saying, "I cannot live without you." Freud also noted that revenge was sometimes a strong motivation for self murder, much in the same way as it is in some of the primitive tribes that have been noted earlier. Suicide was also sometimes an escape from humiliation and at times appeared to be an attempt at communication, what we now know as "the cry for help."

As we might expect, Freud was also very much aware of the relationship between death and sexuality, just as he saw the sado-masochistic complex as associated in some cases with suicide.

Yet with all these clinical impressions Freud was unwilling to draw premature theoretical conclusions about the dynamics of suicidal behavior. At a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1910, the subject of suicide was discussed at some length. Although much clinical material was presented, most of it having to do with aggression, Freud refused to draw premature conclusions.

He addressed the meeting:¹³

I have an impression that in spite of the valuable material that has been brought before us in this discussion, we have not reached a decision on the problem that interests us. We are anxious, above all, to know how it becomes possible for the extra-ordinarily powerful life instinct to be overcome; whether this can only come about with the help of a disappointed libido, or whether the ego can renounce its self-preservation for its own egoistic motives. It may be that we have failed to answer this psychological question because we have not adequate means of approaching it. We can, I think, only take as our starting point the condition of melancholia which is so familiar to us clinically and a comparison between it and the effect of mourning. The affective processes in melancholia, however, and the vicissitudes undergone by the libido in that condition are totally unknown to us. Nor have we arrived at a psychoanalytic understanding of the chronic effect of mourning. Let us suspend our judgment until experience has solved this problem.

The basic problem was how guilt, or anger, or any of the other psychological states could succeed in overcoming the power of the Libido.

In the following years, Freud struggled for a better understanding of how this could be. This struggle resulted in the concepts of ego splitting and the death instinct.

The ego is not a unitary element in the personality but is made up of "identifications," or better, "incorporations" of significant persons in the child's early life. Litman explains this complicated procedure in this way:¹⁴

¹³Sigmund Freud, "Contributions to a Discussion on Suicide," Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, XI, 232 (1910)

¹⁴Litman, "Sigmund Freud on Suicide," p. 14.

Energy withdrawn from a lost object is relocated in the ego and used to recreate the loved one as a permanent feature of the self, an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. "Thus, the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency as though it were an object, the forsaken object." Shadow objects existing as structures in the ego (identifications) obviously are not fully integrated into the total personality. A demarcations zone or fault line remains, along which ego splitting occurs.

The concept of ego splitting was refined by Freud in the 1920's when he identified the parts of the personality, which he called the Id, Ego and Superego. The superego was one of the earliest splits of the ego and remains alive as an incorporation of certain parental attitudes. We are approved, loved, judged, condemned, condoned, abandoned and forgiven by the superego. When this function is essentially negative, or when the ego has strong feelings of hostility against the superego, the stage is set for possible suicide.

But as sophisticated as this explanation is, there are still many questions to be answered, as Litman has pointed out:¹⁵

For example, was it true that in most suicides the ego murdered the object? Or more often did the incorporated object murder the ego?

Freud himself was not satisfied with the completeness of this explanation and, as he did so often, he looked to the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 20.

future to provide a basis for improved understanding.

Early in his career, Freud embraced a monistic view of life. There was only one basic drive, the libido, which was life-affirming. Later, however, he abandoned this concept and:¹⁶

decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, Eros and the destructive instinct. The aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them--thus, in short, to bind together; the aim of the second is, on the contrary, to undo connections and so to destroy things. In the case of the destructive instinct, we may suppose that its final aim is to lead what is living into an inorganic state. For this reason we call it the death instinct.

As a medical man, Freud was aware of the twin processes of catabolism and anabolism--the contemporaneous build-up and break-down of the body cells. As a clinician, he was continually aware of the self-destructiveness of his patients. Although the neurotic is quick to blame external events of his problems, Freud saw through this defense and observed:¹⁷

Their fate is for the most part arranged by themselves and determined by early infantile experience.

Enlarging on this observation, and bringing in the concept of the death instinct, he concluded that in human life as

¹⁶Freud, "An Outline of Psychoanalysis," XXIII, 148-59 (1940).

¹⁷Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (New York: Bantam Books, 1959), p. 44 (1920).

well as in the rest of nature:¹⁸

Everything dies for internal reasons.

Although the death instinct, or Thanatos, is a universally present force in all of life, it is seldom is ever seen in isolation. The two opposing drives are always joined:¹⁹

The two kinds of instinct seldom--perhaps never--appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognizable to our judgment.

The death instinct is the desire of the organism to escape from tension, the desire to return to the absolute peace of the inorganic state. It is the basis for all self-destructive behavior.

The concept of the death instinct has been received with varying attitudes by those who follow in Freud's tradition. Brown²⁰ and Menninger²¹ see it as a cornerstone of great importance, while Zilboorg²² accepts the concept

¹⁸Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁹Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 66 (1930).

²⁰Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (New York: Vintage Books, 1959).

²¹Karl Menninger, Man Against Himself (New York: Harvest Books, 1938).

²²Gregory Zilboorg, "Considerations on Suicide with Particular Reference to that of the Young," Am J of Orthopsychiatry, VIII (Jan. 1937), 15.

as being valid but of little importance insofar as it "says nothing."

The attempt here has been to present only the broadest survey of some of Freud's thinking as it relates to suicide. Suicide, as Freud recognized, is a complex action which has a multiplicity of motivation. There is no single dynamic that can account for man's tendency to kill himself. The concepts of ego splitting and the death instinct are the main features of the phenomenon. Litman identifies²³ these specific suicidal mechanisms which Freud also identified:

a) the loss of love objects, especially those who have loved in certain dangerous ways; b) narcissistic injury symbolically through failure or by direct physiological injury through fatigue or toxins; c) overwhelming affect, rage, guilt, anxiety or combinations; d) extreme splitting of the ego with decathexis of most elements and a setting of one part against the rest; and e) a special suicidal attitude and plan, often based on an identification with someone who was suicidal.

After expressing his basic agreement with the Freudian concepts of suicide, Litman makes this observation out of his experience working with suicidal persons:²⁴

. . . the suicidal drama often reproduces not so much guilt for the unconscious wish of the child to murder the parents but rather a reaction of abandonment on the part of the child to the parent's unconscious wish for the child's death. The mechanisms of regression and

²³Litman, "Sigmund Freud on Suicide," p. 25.

²⁴Ibid., p. 28.

ego-splitting, and the themes in suicide of helplessness, constriction and paranoid distrust, have made the deepest impression on me.

Freud used the Oedipal drama as the organizing point for many of his most important theoretical constructs. Litman, however, finds the pre-oedipal position more helpful in understanding suicidal behavior:²⁵

In our suicide prevention clinic, we are more accustomed to using the mother-child, pre-oedipal relationship as a reference concept. Further research, hopefully, will clarify this issue.

It is remarkable that Freud said so little about the all-important attitude of the mother in instilling into a child the desire for life. It is remarkable because Freud was well aware of the influence of his own mother in instilling into him a feeling of confidence and a zest for living. Moreover, he had found in his patients and in himself, as a reason for continuing to live, the idea that his premature death would be painful to his mother. When Freud's mother died in 1930, age 95, Freud noticed in himself a feeling of liberation. "I was not allowed to die as long as she was alive, and now I may."

Freudian thinking did not stop with Freud's death. He left behind him several dedicated disciples who continue to express and develop his ideas. Two of them are Otto Fenichel and Karl Menninger.

Otto Fenichel²⁶ accepts without reservation the ideas of Freud concerning suicide. He supports the concept that basically suicide is the murder of someone else

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Otto, Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1945).

turned in upon the would-be murdered--what Shneidman has called "murder in the 180th degree."²⁷ Fenichel also stresses the conflict between the ego and the superego as the underlying dynamic. Neurotically depressed persons are the most likely to suicide, since the dynamics of depression are similar to those of suicide. A punitive superego angrily punishes the ego:²⁸

An ambivalent dependence on a sadistic superego and the necessity to get rid of an unbearable guilt tension at any cost are the most frequent causes of suicide.

In contrast to depression, a compulsion neurosis does not often lead to suicide. The libido of the person is not totally involved in the conflict between the ego and superego. Because the compulsive is actually expressing so much aggression against the object, he does not need to turn so much against himself.

If Fenichel stresses the Freudian concept of ego splitting in understanding suicidal behavior, Menninger lays emphasis on the death instinct.

The death instinct is a universal human fact, according to Menninger, and we must come to understand it better so

²⁷Edwin Shneidman, "Orientations toward Death," The Study of Lives, ed. Robert W. White (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 204.

²⁸Fenichel, p. 294.

that we can have some control over it:²⁹

We have come to see that just as the child must learn to love wisely, so he must learn to hate expeditiously, to turn destructive tendencies away from himself toward enemies that actually threaten him rather than toward the friendly and the defenseless, the more usual victims of destructive energy.

But this is not to say that we can ever avoid the death instinct:³⁰

It is true, nevertheless, that in the end each man kills himself in his own selected way, fast or slow, soon or late.

Menninger holds that there are three basic motivations for suicidal behavior, the wish to kill, the wish to be killed and the wish to die. The motivation of the first is aggression, the second is guilt and the third is the wish for peace. The motivations are usually interrelated, just as the two basic drives, Eros and Thanatos, are interrelated.

Suicidal behavior can be seen in four forms: the acute, which refers to the overt suicidal attempt; the chronic, the slow, steady, lifelong "suicide by inches"; focal, the localized attack on parts of the body; and organic, which can be described as the psychosomatic illness. All are expressions of thanatos, and involve, in varying proportions, the three death wishes, to kill, to

²⁹Menninger, Man Against Himself, p. vii.

³⁰Ibid.

be killed, and to die.

To combat these forms of self-destructiveness, Menninger urges the mobilization of intellect:³¹

I believe that our best defense against self-destructiveness lies in the courageous application of intelligence to human phenomenology. If such is our nature, it were better that we knew it and knew it in all its protean manifestations. To see all forms of self-destruction from the standpoint of their dominant principles would seem to be the logical progress toward self-preservation and toward a unified view of medical science.

In addition to those who follow directly the Freudian tradition, other theorists have sought explanations of suicidal behavior. The best survey of these other schools of thought is found in The Cry for Help.³² We now turn to a brief survey of the contributions of some of these theories

Jung

The Jungian point of view on suicide, as expressed by Klopfer,³³ stresses the concept of the separation of the ego from the true self. The ego, in this framework, is "merely the center of the conscious part of our personality functioning." The "self" constitutes a deeper center

³¹Ibid.

³²Norman Farberow and Edwin Shneidman, The Cry for Help (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

³³Ibid., p. 193.

of the of the functioning of the individual organism, maintaining the contact between the individual and the cosmos to which it belongs.

To experience life as meaningful, there must be at least some contact between the ego and the self. When the separation widens, a sense of meaninglessness and futility ensues. In an unconscious effort to remedy this situation, the ego may want to die in order to return to the archetype of the Magna Mater--to regain constant contact with the self--and to be reborn. Suicide may be the way that this is attempted. This striving for rebirth is a major Jungian concept.

Another important concept in regard to suicide is Jung's formulation of the dark and light side of the self. When the dark side predominates, death may be seen as preferable to life, and suicide becomes an active possibility. We see this condition in (1) the death of a hero or martyr, where the "life of the individual seems less important than the preservation of the ideal"; (2) cases of great pain or mental anguish when death is seen as a liberation; (3) counter-phobic reaction to death; (4) the desire for reunion with a dead loved one; (5) the search for freedom; and (6) the search for closure.

Phenominogically considered, there four classifications of suicide according to the Jungian conception.

These classifications are polar in nature. The first is the pole of Collective and Individual suicide which refers to the distinction of whether the suicidal act is in obedience to, or in contradiction of, the cultural expectation. The second class designates the poles of active and passive suicide, the latter referring to a situation where a person may save himself from death but does not take the action necessary, such as in the case of a captain going down with his ship. The third polar pair is that of the sincere and the attention-getting suicide attempts which are distinguished in reference to the wish to die. The final class is the planned and the impulsive suicide.

Adler

The Adlerian³⁴ understanding of suicide centers around four concepts which are basic to an understanding of Adler's theory of personality.

The doctrine of a pampered life style is seen as useful in describing some instances of suicide. One who has a pampered life style is a dependent person who always tries to lean on others and who is incapable of working with other people on the basis of equality. He is characterized by deficient social interest, another basic

³⁴Ibid., p. 204.

Adlerian concept, and his only major expectation in life is that others will fulfill his wishes. When this style of living fails, he has few personal resources to fall back on and may become suicidal.

The suicidal person may have strong feelings of inferiority which he seeks to compensate for by great attempts to achieve positions of great importance. He tends to be ambitious and vain, and because his self-expectations are unrealistic in relation to his abilities, he is apt to fail. When this happens, his feelings of inferiority are frequently exposed and he may attempt suicide.

Adler also observes that the level of activity among suicides is high, tending toward mania. They frequently act in an uncontrolled manner.

Finally, Adler points out that the life style of a suicidal person is characterized by veiled aggression. It is not unusual that he seeks to hurt others by hurting himself and then looking for sympathy. This method of handling aggression may easily become suicidal.

Sullivan

Sullivan's concept³⁵ of personality stresses the importance of interaction between persons. The attitudes of significant other people are of prime importance in the

³⁵Ibid., p. 220.

development of the personality. A person's self image is largely derived from the introjections of what others communicate to him about him.

According to Sullivan, a person's response to a situation is a response of the whole person, and isolated personality factors are not understood unless they are seen in the context of the full personality.

Sullivan would stress that the response of suicide is a complex reaction, and one that cannot be simply explained. However, some generalizations can be made. Suicidal behavior implies "hateful and hostile types of integrations with other persons." It includes the elements of anxiety, the products of inadequate personifications; envy, stemming from a lack of a sense of one's own worth; and depression, which points to self-deprecating thoughts.

Horney

The Horney³⁶ conceptualization of suicidal behavior centers around the four main factors of the feelings of hopelessness, suffering, alienation, and the search for glory.

Suicide, according to Horney, is an attempt of the individual to deal with these feelings of inadequacy. She stresses, too, childhood development and the attitudes

³⁶Ibid., p. 236.

of the significant others in the child's environment. Also to be considered in the study of suicide are the elements of the cultural mores, values of life and concepts of life and death.

Personal Construct

The Personal Construct theory of personality, as expressed by Kelly,³⁷ asks the basic question: "What was the person trying to validate by his (suicidal) action?"

In order to understand any specific incident of suicide, we must understand the individual person's construction of life. Specifically, this school of thought looks to (1) the basic postulate and choice corollary by which this person lives; (2) dilating verses constriction--whether the person is expanding or narrowing his life in order to make some sense of it; (3) the role of anxiety; (4) the person's perceiving of threat; (5) hostility; and (6) guilt.

In his overview and summary of these positions, Norman Farberow³⁸ finds that five elements appear to be commonly discussed by advocates of the different points of view.

Dependency is commonly seen as an important factor in suicidal behavior. When a person has not gained

³⁷Ibid., p. 255.

³⁸Ibid., p. 290.

sufficient personal independence and integration, he is at the mercy of external factors and has not the inner strength to constructively handle stressful situations.

Aggression and Hostility are terms that were often used interchangeably and are frequently seen as primary considerations in any expression of self-destructive behavior.

Guilt is the third factor that appears to play an important role in a person's decision to kill himself.

Anxiety is a broad term, and although some of the schools do not talk about it explicitly, it appears to be a concept that is implicitly considered in most attempts to understand suicide.

Finally, suicide is often understood in terms of an individual's attempt to make an adjustment either to himself or to his environment.

As might be expected, the attempts to explain the dynamics of suicide appear to rest on the theoretical formulations of personality as they are understood by the particular school. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to speak of a psychology of suicide. Although there is some overlapping of concepts, and much common ground between the schools, the basic orientation of the individual theorist will largely determine his understanding of the dynamics of suicidal behavior.

The best we can do at this point is to return to the conclusion that Freud made, that suicidal behavior has a multiplicity of motivations and appears to be best understood in terms of the specific person who is suicidal. The meanings of the act (conscious or unconscious) are best understood in terms of the individual personality structure. With Freud, we look to the future for more understanding of this complex issue.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THIS STUDY

To state that everyone participates in some self destructive behavior during his lifetime is merely to utter a truism. From the bright child who persistently gets poor grades in school as an expression of hostility against parental pressure to the person who avoids meaningful intimacy with other people in a vast number of ingenious ways, to the person who stunts his own emotional growth by clinging to yesterday's symbols of security, to the person who ignores the signs of bodily illness and doesn't avail himself of medical help, to the person who lives perpetually in burdensome debt, to the person who overeats, oversmokes, overdrinks, to the person who overworks or overloafs, to the person who puts a loaded gun in his mouth and pulls the trigger--to all these, self-destructive behavior is omnipresent and takes a multitude of expressions.

Karl Menninger is probably the best known of the writers who have sought to point out that each one of us continually acts in a variety of self-destructive ways. The motivation for these behaviors is deep rooted and mostly unconscious. But whatever the causes, the phenomenon of human self-destructiveness is an amazing fact

of life.¹

Whoever studies the behavior of human beings cannot escape the conclusion that we must reckon with an enemy within the lines. It becomes increasingly evident that some of the destruction which curses the earth is self destruction; the extraordinary propensity of the human being to join hands with external forces in an attack upon his own existence is one of the most remarkable of biological phenomena.

I. DEFINITIONS

Up to now, we have been using the term "self destruction" in its widest scope, including all phases from relatively minor examples of self limitation up to the overt act of self murder. There is a distinction, however, between what we shall call "self limitation" and "suicide."

Every student of human beings is aware that all of us, in one way or another, from time to time acts in self defeating ways. Often for neurotic reasons, we impose on ourselves limitations or defeats which would not be otherwise necessary. Yet we pursue our lives with the expectation and desire to continue living. We may be self-limiting and self-defeating, but we are not suicidal in any significant sense.

In some persons, however, the desire to stop living

¹Karl Menninger, Man Against Himself (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1938), p. 4.

becomes manifest. This person is not self-destructive in the second sense of the term, he wants to kill himself, he is suicidal. This paper is concerned with the suicidal person, the person who is manifesting such behavior that it is likely he will die in the near future.

But as Shneidman pointed out, the very concept of "death" must be more carefully designated:²

Indeed the word "death" has become a repository for pervasive logical and epistemological confusions The first order of business might well be to clarify the concepts presently embedded in our current notions of death. For my part, I would wish to eschew, where possible, the concept of death, and instead use concepts and terms which are operationally viable.

In his effort to do just that, Shneidman offers two sets of concepts which we accept and incorporate as the conceptual framework of this study. In place of the term "death," Shneidman delineates the terms cessation, termination, interruption and continuation.³

Cessation is "the stopping of the potentiality of any (further) conscious experience." It refers to the final halting of individual consciousness, the demise of the psychic processes. An example which Shneidman uses is that of a young man injured while riding his motorcycle.

²Edwin S. Shneidman, "Orientations toward Death," The Study of Lives, ed. Robert W. White (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 209.

³Ibid.

His head was crushed and he showed no sign of any conscious experience and suffered a nearly total absence of reflexes. Yet he was kept "alive" for a few days in the hospital before all physical processes stopped. He had experienced cessation at the time of the accident.

Termination refers to "the stopping of the physiological functions of the body." The motorcycle rider terminated when he stopped breathing. Cessation, then, refers to the psychological person, and termination has to do with the biological organism.

Interruption is the stopping of consciousness with the actuality, and usually the expectation, of further conscious experience. It is a temporary cessation, and the best example of that is sleep.

Continuation is seen in the intention "not to embrace death, but rather to find surcease from external or internalized aspects of life." Shneidman defines continuation as "experiences, in the absence of interruption, the stream of temporally continuous conscious events." Some suicide attemptors reveal more concern for continuation than for cessation, and this is an important difference in their diagnosis and treatment.

These, then, are the four precise concepts which we adopt in place of the more indiscriminate term, "death."

We find the term "suicide" to be as broad and

ill-defined as the term "death," and Shneidman again offers more specific concepts. There are four basic orientations which an individual may have toward his own cessation. The four orientations, with their sub-categories, are these:⁴

- I. Intentioned
 - A. Cessation-seeker
 - B. Cessation-initiator
 - C. Cessation-ignorer
 - D. Cessation-darer
- II. Subintentioned
 - A. Cessation-chancer
 - B. Cessation-hastener
 - C. Cessation-capitulator
 - D. Cessation-experimenter
- III. Unintentioned
 - A. Cessation-welcomer
 - B. Cessation-accepter
 - C. Cessation-postponer
 - D. Cessation-disdainer
 - E. Cessation-fearer
- IV. Contraintentioned
 - A. Cessation-feigner
 - B. Cessation-threatener

By Intentioned, Shneidman "refers to those cases in which the individual plays a direct and conscious role in his own demise." A cessation-seeker is one who has expressed a wish for cessation and acts in accordance with this goal. A cessation-initiator refers to a person who

⁴Ibid.

has good reason to believe that cessation is near (perhaps because of a fatal illness which he knows to be in its final phase) and prefers to take control, and take an active part in his own cessation. A cessation-ignorer is one who believes that he can suffer termination without cessation. The best example of this are persons of certain religious persuasions who are convinced of some life after death. They may suffer termination, but because they believe they are immortal they do not believe they will suffer cessation. They will continue in life, perhaps to be rejoined with loved ones. A cessation-darar is one who apparently enjoys risking his life in situations where the odds for his survival may be narrow. Players of "Russian Roulette" may fit this sub-category. Persons who engage in dangerous activities with insufficient training or safeguards "bet their lives" with close odds.

The second major concept refers to subintentioned modes of behavior which Shneidman defines as "those instances in which the individual plays an indirect, covert, partial or unconscious role in his own demise." There are four sub-categories. The cessation-chancer is similar to the cessation-darar, mentioned above, but with a difference in the odds. Persons who "leave it up to chance" or who "gamble with death" or who "half intend to do it," with the odds heavily stacked in favor of their cessation

fit into this category. The cessation-hastener, as the name implies, facilitates his own cessation through means which might otherwise have been seen as natural causes. The person who is careless about taking medicine prescribed in treatment for serious disease such as diabetes or a heart condition is hastening his own termination and cessation. The cessation-capitulator is a person who, "by virtue of some strong emotion, usually his fear of death, plays a psychological role in effecting his termination. In a sense, he gives in to death or he scares himself to death." Examples of this are deaths attributable to strong superstitious beliefs such as Voodoo or Taboo breaking. The Cessation-experimenter is one who "consciously wishes neither interruption nor cessation but . . . seems to wish a chronically altered, usually befogged continuation state. Examples of this include the use of alcohol or drugs with which the person experiments, inducing varying states of benumbed continuation.

The third major concept in regard to cessation is that of the Unintentioned. This describes events which lead to cessation but which the person, psychologically, has had no active part to play. Something happens to him which he cannot control. An airplane crashing into the roof of a home, far from an airport, kills a family. Their termination and cessation can be described as unintentioned.

There are five sub-categories. The cessation-welcomer, although playing no part in his demise, still welcomes the end to his life. Very old people, especially when ill, may welcome the end when they feel they "have lived a very full life." The cessation-accepter is on the same continuum as the cessation-welcomer but is more passive. He neither welcomes nor puts off the end. What will be will be--he is resigned to his fate. The cessation-postponer, if he thinks about cessation at all, wants to avoid it for as long as possible. His orientation is toward life and he wants to continue the business of living as long as possible. The cessation-disdainer is disdainful of thoughts of cessation. Typical of this group is the teenager who feels he is above such danger. The cessation-fearer is one who is fearful of death, perhaps to the extent of being phobic.

The final major division is that of the Contrain-tentioned. In this category are persons who may have threatened suicide or attempted suicide but with no desire to invite cessation or termination. Their attempt is to alert significant other persons in their lives. They have no intention of dying, quite the contrary, they want to live, but to live with improved circumstances, and they use the suicidal cry in an effort to change their environment.

Thus has Shneidman given us the method of speaking more precisely about the wide areas of suicide and death. This study is now defined as being concerned with certain persons whose self-destructiveness includes intentional cessation and intentional termination. This is what we mean by the term "suicidal."

Having now defined this term, the problem is now to identify such persons. It is impossible, of course, to work directly with anyone who has committed suicide, but it is possible to identify suicidal persons prior to their own demise.

Robert E. Litman, clinical director at the Suicide Prevention Center, states:⁵

Retrospective studies of cases of committed suicide have revealed that these persons usually went through a preliminary prodromal phase during which the suicides revealed his self-destructive intention. They threatened verbally to commit suicide, or they talked about suicide, or they had made recent suicide attempts, or they showed certain specific behavioral changes (for example, a sudden increase in barbiturate and alcoholic intake, or the development of a depressive syndrome). These persons were potential suicides before death. Living persons who manifest such behavior are potential suicides. Such people may or may not represent emergencies.

Acting on this observation, that suicidal persons normally are identifiable prior to the final act of self-

⁵Robert E. Litman, "Emergency Response to Potential Suicide," J of the Michigan State Med Society, LXII (1963), 68-72.

destruction, the Suicide Prevention Center developed an instrument by which they seek to identify the suicidal person. The instrument, called the lethality rating scale, attempts to assess a person's potential on a numerical range of one to nine, one representing the minimum degree of lethality and nine the maximum.

Dr. Litman summarizes the factors which are considered in the evaluation:⁶

I. Case History: Factual

- A. Age and Sex
- B. Onset of self-destructive behavior: chronic, repetitive pattern, or recent behavioral change?
- C. Method of possible self-injury; availability, lethality?
- D. Recent loss of loved person: death, separation, divorce?
- E. Medical symptoms: history of recent illness or surgery?
- F. Resources: available relative or friends, financial status?

II. Judgmental--Evaluative

- A. Status of communication with patient
- B. Kinds of feeling expressed
- C. Reactions of referring person
- D. Personality status and diagnostic impression

Each item on the scale is rated separately, and then a cumulative score is derived. A numerical rating of five or more indicates a serious suicidal threat. Perhaps a brief explanation of the significance of each of the

⁶Ibid.

elements would be helpful.

Age and Sex: Suicidal communications from males tend to be more serious than from women, and communications from older persons tend to be more serious than from younger. Thus the level of lethality tends to be high in a fifty-year-old male and low in a fifteen-year-old female.

Onset of Self-Destructive Behavior: Most persons who actually commit suicide have attempted it before; thus a person with a history of suicide attempts tends to be serious. An acute onset of self-destructive behavior, although needing immediate intervention, indicates a good prognosis; a person with a long chronic history of self-destructiveness usually indicates a bad prognosis.

Method of Possible Self-Injury: As a rule, the more specific the person's suicidal plans are in relation to time, place and means, the more serious the threat is. The more lethal the method and the easy availability of the means indicates high lethality. Thus a person who plans to shoot himself tomorrow at nine o'clock and who has the gun and the ammunition is a higher risk than the person who is thinking about killing himself sometime with aspirin which he hasn't purchased yet.

Recent Loss of a Loved Person: The recent loss of a loved person, either through death or other separation, raises the level of lethality. The closer a person has

been to the suicidal individual, the greater the risk.

Medical Symptoms: A recent history of hospitalization or other physical complications tends to raise the suicidal risk.

Resources: The attitudes of friends and relatives of the suicidal person is an important factor. Are they concerned, rejecting, willing to help, disgusted? Does the patient have a history of solid relationships, or is there a history of shallow relationships frequently changed? Has the person recently suffered a loss of a job or other financial loss? Has he anyone to whom he can turn? Are there interested professional people in his life? The more isolated the patient, the higher the rating on the lethality scale.

In the second division of Judgmental-Evaluative factors, the first is the status of communication with the patient. How does the patient respond to the therapist? Is communication easy to establish? Is the patient willing to allow the therapist to help him? Is the patient hostile and resistive? The warmer the relationship that the therapist can establish with the patient, the better the prognosis.

Kinds of Feelings Expressed: Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, exhaustion, failure and the feeling "I want out" indicate a serious suicidal situation.

Feelings of agitation and confusion are also to be taken seriously. Expressed feelings of frustration, anger, rage without overwhelming confusion indicate a somewhat less serious danger.

Reactions of Referring Persons: If the referring person indicates feelings of warmth, concern, sympathy with an admission of his own need for help, the prognosis tends to be more favorable. If, however, the referring person indicates a defensive, paranoid, rigid, punishing, moralistic or dependent attitude, the suicidal danger is increased. Close, ambivalent, symbiotic relationships also tend to be indications of a serious situation.

Personality Status and Diagnostic Impression: Indications of psychotic thinking or severe depression are serious. A history of prior therapy or hospitalization for mental disturbance are important factors.

The subjects for this study have all been evaluated by professional therapists at the Suicide Prevention Center, and according these criteria have been rated a five or higher on the Lethality Scale. This indicates that they are suicidal persons.

Religion: If the term "suicide has a number of uses and ambiguous meanings," the same observation may be multiplied several times and applied to the term "religion." Few words in our language are used as loosely

and as indiscriminately as this one. When Henry Murray, in his important work A Clinical Study of Sentiments,⁷ addressed himself to the area of "Sentiment toward Religion," he surveyed the literature and reported seventeen definitions of "religion" as they had been formulated by important thinkers. In our analysis of these seventeen definitions, we abstracted seven factors which we feel are important considerations in formulating our definition for the purpose of this study.

The first factor is that of some concept of God. Westermarck considers this the essential element in defining religion:

(Religion is) a regardful attitude toward a supernatural being on whom man feels himself dependent and to whom he makes an appeal in his worship.

William James makes the same emphasis but is wider in his concept:

The life of religion . . . consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto.

Murray himself appears to accept this focus:

If a man does not believe in God, he is not religious.

The second important factor to be considered is that

⁷Henry A. Murray and Christiana D. Morgan, "A Clinical Study of Sentiments," Genetic Psychology Monographs, XXXII (1945), 1-149. All the definitions of religions following are from Murry's work.

of the field of interpersonal relations. For MacMurry, this is the essence of religion:

The task of religion is the realization of fellowship. The religious activity of the self is its effort to enter into communion with the other.

Some concept of another world is frequently associated with the term religion. In Biblical terms it is the "Kingdom of God" or "eternal life" which has reference not to a temporal order following death but a quality of living in this world. Thus Christians are Biblically described as "being in the world, but not of the world." Santayana gives expression to this concept:

Another world to live in--whether we ever expect to pass wholly into it or no--is what we mean by having a religion.

A fourth element to be included in the concept of "religion" is that of espousing a Cause to which one dedicates his life and offers his loyalty. The Cause need not be associated with any supernatural concept. Whitehead, for example, says simply"

Religion is world loyalty.

Randall expresses the same concept in different words:

There is that in human nature that demands unquestioned allegiance to some final end.

Jung touches on the same theme:

Religion is a relationship to the highest and strongest value, be it positive or negative. The relationship is voluntary as well as involuntary, that it, you can accept consciously the value by which you are possessed unconsciously. That psychological fact which is the

greatest power in your system is the God, since it is always the overwhelming psychic factor which is called God.

For Laski, any great Cause is a religion Cause because it has the power to move men:

All the great movements of our time have commanded the power to invoke in their service a quality of effort in which the essence is the religious spirit.

Perhaps the most sweeping and all-inclusive definition of religion comes from Santayana:

Religion is the symbolic, poetical representation of the conditions and aims of life.

A fifth element which we found to be present in this collection of definitions of religion is that of deep and introspective concern for human character. Whitehead offers three definitions which carry this theme:

Religion is the art and theory of the internal life of man.

What should emerge from religion is individual worth of character.

Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.

Knox takes this deep concern with human character and relates it to the highest:

Religion at its best is the deepest response of the the self responding to the highest we know.

A sixth factor which must be included in a serious definition of religion is the concept of wholeness and unity. Bosanquet says:

Nobody is anything except as he joins himself to something. You cannot be whole unless you join a whole. This, I believe, is religion.

Supporting this concept is the fact that the very word "religion" stems from the Latin "religio," meaning "to tie or bind together," thus forming a whole. In a similar vein, the term "Holy" carries the same implication, as Bishop Stephen Neil⁸ points out:

And wholeness, as has so often been pointed out, is just another name for what Christians mean by holiness --the wholeness of human personality as seen in Jesus of Nazareth, the wholeness of a society in which people really love one another, the wholeness of a world redeemed.

It is the same root word as that of "heal" which means "to make whole."

The seventh, and final, element which we found in this collection of definitions is the concept of the mystical. Jung is one thinker who points to this:

Religion is a careful and scrupulous observation of the numinosum, a dynamic existence or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will.

Rudolf Otto⁹ speaks of the "mysterium tremendum" having to do with the mysterious, the unknowable, the transcendent, the numinous, the mystical experience of the Holy which reason does not understand.

It is our position that all these factors--the idea

⁸Stephen Neill, Christian Holiness, (New York: Harper Bros., 1960).

⁹Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (Oxford, 1931).

of God; personal relationships; other worldliness; the concept of a cause or highest value; deep personal concern with human character; the sense of the unity, totality, wholeness of life; and a sense of the mystical--all can be expressions of man's religious nature. Any working definition of religion will have to be broad enough to include them all.

On the other hand, we must be aware of the danger of defining religion in so broad a way that it loses its meaning. Charles Morris¹⁰ defines religion so broadly that we lose sight of what religion is:

(Religion is) the total orientation of the personality. Our working definition of religion, then, must be broad enough to include the full range of religious expression and not be limited to a single religious conception or denominational point of view, but narrow enough so that it identifies a specific human function about which we can speak.

Paul Tillich's¹¹ definition of religion is:

ultimate concern about the ground and meaning of our being.

This is close to Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute dependence" but, as Tillich points out, is not as subject to misinterpretation.

¹⁰Charles Morris, Paths of Life (New York: Harper Bros., 1942).

¹¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of religion is offered:

Religion is the system of beliefs by which a person conceptualizes the meaning of his existence, and by which he understands his relationship to, and his involvement in, the world.

According to this formulation, a person's religion may or may not include a belief in a supernatural God; it is intimately involved in his personal relationships; it may or may not be other worldly; it does have to do with a person's goals; the Cause or causes to which he considers commitment; it does include the depth of personal concern with human character; it does include the sense of wholeness; and it may find expression in mystical ways.

The "system of beliefs" may take the form of conscious or unconscious formulation, or both. It is not enough, therefore, simply to inquire of a person what his system of beliefs may be. In addition to this inquiry, we must also observe how this religion is being manifest. In addition to listening to the religious history of our subjects, we found Murray's list of criteria of religious sentiment extremely helpful.

Murray made a distinction between "super-natural religion" and "natural religion." In his effort to determine the subject's sentiment toward supernatural

religion, he used four criteria:¹²

- I. Sentiments in favor of the belief in God, which include:
 - an assured belief
 - the will to believe
 - the desire to experience God
 - preoccupation with the problem of his existence
 - prayer
- II. Sentiments in favor of the moral superiority of the Bible, specifically:
 - attitudes toward the Ten Commandments
 - attitudes toward the Beatitudes
 - attitudes toward the Parables
 - attitudes toward religious teachings at home or school
- III. Sentiments in favor of the Church as a beneficent institution for self and others, measured by
 - membership
 - attendance
- IV. Sentiments in favor of the Clergy

Murray then developed fifteen criteria to measure the strength of sentiments toward natural religion:

1. Sentiment for self-regeneration and growth of character
2. Sentiment for ideal interpersonal relations
3. Sentiment for creation and evolution of an ideal group
4. Sentiment for the means to attain these ideal ends
5. Capacity for dedication
6. Sentiment in favor of a long-range perspective
7. Sentiment for the potential worth of human beings

¹²Murray, "A Clinical Study of Sentiments," Genetic Psychology Monographs, pp. 1-149.

8. Sentiment for moral standards
9. Sentiment for self judgment
10. Sentiment for extra-personal orientation--the good of the whole
11. Sentiment for valued subjective states, satisfying inner, spiritual considerations as opposed to external ones
12. Sentiment for introversion
13. Sentiment for submission to a beneficent possession
14. Sentiment for symbolic representations
15. Sentiment for insociation

Having now defined the term "suicidal" and described how a suicidal person is designated, and having defined "religion" and described how religiosity is determined, we are now ready to describe the purpose of the study.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

For centuries it has been assumed by the advocates of many religions, notably Christianity, that religion had some effect on man's suicidal impulses. Perhaps Harry Emerson Fosdick best expresses this point of view:¹³

Religion, more than any other force, has given men the thought that there is something sacred in life that must not be violated. . . . Tenuous and temporary, a human being seems anything but triumphant in this overwhelming cosmos. Yet at its best, Christianity has taken up the cudgels for personality, for its divine origin, spiritual nature, infinite worth and endless possibilities.

Commenting on Fosdick's preaching, Dublin observes:¹⁴

¹³Louis I. Dublin and Bessie Bunzel, To Be or Not To Be (New York: Smith and Haas, 1933), p. 326.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 327.

By emphasizing the value of personality and the worth of every human being, his preaching and personal ministrations tend to imbue those who hear him with a feeling of self-respect which overbalances the sense of inadequateness and futility often leading to suicide.

But this assumption has not gone unchallenged. We have already indicated that Durkheim, for one, insisted that a religious belief had no effect on the suicide rate whatsoever. In a more recent writing, Stephen C. Pepper doubts whether any philosophical (and we can add religious) set of beliefs has much effect on a person's tendency to suicide. He begins by asking the question:¹⁵

Can a set of concepts keep a person, or help keep him emotionally balanced in relation to the reality of a situation in which he becomes involved?

and ends by answering it in the negative:

. . . the dynamics of human action is one thing, and the intellectual channeling of it another. There are no dynamics or drives intrinsic to thought, or very little. All the dynamics come from drives and the emotional side of the personality.

This means we cannot rely on correct reasoning from a set of true concepts always being effective in leading a man to act reasonably--a philosophy will not necessarily make a man philosophical.

Yet again, Dublin:¹⁶

Religion gives its adherents a firm grip on life even in the midst of adversity. It clarifies and resolves doubts concerning the purpose of existence. Above all,

¹⁵Stephen Pepper, "Can a Philosophy Make One Philosophical?", Essays in Self Destruction.

¹⁶Louis Dublin, Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study (New York: Ronald Press, 1963).

it gives a sense of serenity and peace to those who rely upon a power transcending puny human limitations. We can see why simple people who are sincerely devout rarely commit suicide even in the face of overwhelming difficulties.

The purpose of this study, then, is to contribute some empirical finding toward the resolving of this conflict. We ask this question: What is the nature of this person's religiosity,¹⁷ and how does it relate to his suicidal wish?

III. RESEARCH METHOD

Background: Preparatory to conducting a study of religious attitudes of people in Salt Lake City, Cline and Richards¹⁸ made an extensive survey of the literature relevant to prior studies of religious attitudes. Their findings were discouraging:

The evidence would suggest that significant empirical studies of the psychology of religion are a real rarity and that this has certainly not been a popular area of

¹⁷I adopt the term "religiosity" with some misgivings, recognizing that it is an awkward and unprecise word. As used here, it is expressive of a person's actual religious feelings, attitudes, and actions. It is used in connection with the definition of religion offered in this study. I use it as a general term, in that it is not dependent on any particular religious denomination, but rather points to that quality of human nature that I have defined as being religious.

¹⁸Victor B. Cline and James M. Richards, "A Factor Analytic Study of Religious Belief and Behavior," J of Personality and Social Psychology, (June 1965.)

study for psychologists. Yet religion in one form or another is still important to most U.S. citizens, and whether they identify with it or rebel against it, it still effects their lives in a multitude of ways.

In summary they reaffirm a statement made by Thouless in 1938:

There is a marked poverty of scientific knowledge in the psychology of religion.

Perhaps one reason for the scarcity of such knowledge is in the nature of the subject matter itself. Some areas of human life do not appear to be subject to the strict type of statistical research which can be conducted in a laboratory. In their article on research, Cannel and Kahn¹⁹ comment:

To some extent the needs of the social sciences for data can be met through techniques of observation and physical measurement. To an increasing degree, however, social science is demanding data which must be reported by individuals out of their own experience.

Significant data in the area of the religiosity of suicidal persons is the kind of data that can only come from the individuals themselves, as they speak out of their own life experience. This is the view, also, of Louis Dublin²⁰ who has made so many significant statistical contributions

¹⁹Cannell and Kahn, "The Collection of Data by Interviewing," Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences, eds. Festinger and Katz (New York: Dryden Press, 1953).

²⁰Dublin, Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study, p. 78.

to the understanding of suicide. He states:

We cannot measure statistically the influence of religion as such on the suicide rate, for we do not know whether the individuals who have committed suicide were devoutly religious or not.

Nor, I might add, do we know the nature of their religiosity. That is to say, the religious affiliation of suicidal people can be measured statistically along with much other data relative to their social situation. But the religious faith of these persons who decide to end their own lives can best be discovered through other methods.

Method: In this study, I am attempting to determine the nature of the religiosity of certain suicidal persons. The entire focus of the problem is idiosyncratic, as indeed it must be. There are no established norms for either suicidal or religious attitudes. We must, therefore, as Cannell and Kahn suggest, turn to data which can only be reported by individuals out of their own experience.

The need for this type of research has been strongly and ably expressed by Dr. Edwin S. Shneidman in an address before the American Psychological Association. I quote from parts of that address:²¹

²¹Edwin S. Shneidman, "Some Reflections on Personality Explorers, 1938-1963," J of Projective Techniques and Personality Assessment, XXVIII:2 (1964), 156-160.

We believe it especially important that attempts be made to conduct intensive studies of few cases, perhaps as few as a dozen, and, in some instances, studies of a single case . . . We should not be content to know some few pre-selected facts about many people, or even many facts about only one person, but rather we should aspire to investigate intensively several people--paranormal, normal, supernormal--seeking what is common to all, present in many, and existent only in each--the universal, the ubiquitous and the unique--all the while keeping our minds open for new groupings, new relationships of intra-human aspects, new human complexes. And within each of these three we need to distinguish between what is pervasive, habitual, characterologic about a person on the one hand, and what are the current, transient, waxing exacerbated, "clinical" aspects of that same individual on the other hand. This distinction is critically important in dealing with the varieties of disturbed persons.

The intensive, multifaceted investigation of a single individual can be a crucially useful aspect of psychological science. Most of this group know of already existent cases and rules for the preparation of cases such as appear in Murray's Explorations in Personality, in Dollard's Criteria for the Life History, in Robert White's Lives in Progress, in Erikson's Young Man Luther, in Freud's case of phobic Little Hans, etc.

Shneidman goes on to say that the traditional normative studies now being carried on by graduate students in most universities are of value, and have a place in research.

But--and this is the core point--these normative studies should not be the entirety of our discipline, nor should all the honorifics attach to them. We should not concentrate exclusively on doing what we know how to do (or on searching for problems we know how to handle); we need also to attend to some of the problems concerning the constellations of aspects within man which we currently cannot handle easily or precisely, or elegantly, but which actually seem to be more important and thus desperately need to be investigated. . . .

We should now move forward to dynamic auto-spection dealing with the exciting and complicated real world of feelings, thoughts, aspirations, urges, impulses and behaviors as they relate themselves within the individual.

He concludes his address:

Obviously, as you can see, the concept which is being propounded in relation to exploring personality is that the well-delineated psychometric path is not the royal road to the city of wonders, which turn out to be most mechanical anyway. Rather, we need to travel the by-ways to the villages where life is, to see the not-so-simple farmer and his wife in the cottage, to play with the children and, occasionally, as "people watchers," to place ourselves in positions to observe (with a multiplicity of new and old instruments and attitudes) our many subjects in their varieties of single activities and dynamic relationships. A quarter of a century after the great Explorations, the glorious season for man-watching naturalists has just barely begun.

The method of this study, then is an attempt to follow the by-ways. Using a small sample, which I make no claim to be statistically representative, I sought permission to enter their private lives in a deep and meaningful way, and to be taught about their religious concern and intended cessation.

The subjects were selected from the clientele of the Suicide Prevention Center. Staff therapists were asked to refer patients to the researcher when they had fulfilled the following qualifications: that they had been rated a five or more on the lethality rating scale by a qualified rater (usually the therapist himself), that they were not overtly psychotic, that they have sufficient

verbal skills to be able to express themselves adequately, and that they be willing to participate in the project.

The number of subjects was deliberately kept small, limited to five subjects, in order that I might be able to work intensively with each one. We have eschewed the problem of sampling.

Murray and Kluckhohn have observed:²²

Everyman is in certain respects:

- a. like all other men
- b. like some other men
- c. like no other man

This is what Shneidman refers to as the universal, the ubiquitous and the unique. The concern in this project was to take seriously the unique, to attend to the ubiquitous, and to seek to understand more clearly the universal.

Such a research design has certain limitations. For one, since the study is not statistical in nature, there can be no statistically valid conclusions drawn. In addition, since there was no attempt made to find a representative sample of suicidal patients, no generalized findings can be supported. The study is intended, instead, to discover something about the religious conceptions of suicidal people, in an effort to learn if such

²²Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray, Personality in Nature, Society and Culture, ed. David Schneider (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

a study is feasible, and if so, what might be some of the more specific areas which are likely to be profitable undertakings for subsequent research. This then, is an exploratory study, undertaken in the hope that it might be both a stimulous and a guide to later investigations.

The decision was made not to use standardized tests in an effort to rate the quality of the subject's religiosity. The reasons for this decision are: that I did not want to pre-select the items to be considered as forming a person's religion, except in the broadest way. Instead, the effort was made in the interview to allow the subject to talk about what he considered his religiosity in his own terms.

Another reason why tests were not used, was that there was no attempt to compare our subjects with any other group. The interest was simply to try to examine how their own religious beliefs and practices related to their own suicidal tendencies.

Research instruments: The main instrument which was used was the personal interview. Sarason sees at least three benefits from this type of research:²³

Clinical observations, usually in the form of case studies and clinical reports, serve, among other

²³I. G. Sarason, Contemporary Research in Personality (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1962).

functions, (1) to provide leads for future well-controlled laboratory and field studies; (2) to shed light on theoretical issues; and (3) to highlight the complexity of human behavior.

Although the interviews were not conducted in a rigid question and answer manner, the effort was made to guide the person into expressions of his private religiosity and his suicidal wishes. The subjects were interviewed for four separate hour-long private interviews which were taped in full. Inquiry was made into their developmental history, their suicidal history, their religious history and their present religious and suicidal postures. Consultation with the subject's therapist was periodically held to verify information and exchange clinical impressions. When the case write-ups were complete, they were showed to the concerned therapist and requested any reaction the therapist may have. The write-ups were written from an objective and non-evaluative point of view, and extensive use was made of direct quotations from the subjects as they were recorded on tape. The purpose in this is two-fold: to aid the researcher in maintaining his clinical objectivity, and to permit the reader access to the raw data. Analysis and interpretation are confined to separate chapters.

In addition to the interviews, each subject was asked to complete the MMPI, the Cornell Index, and a questionnaire developed for this study.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit some general information quickly to help the interviewer gain an immediate overview of the subjects' background and general orientation. The questionnaire was not designed to be scored, and so is not reported as a formal part of this study. In addition to providing the examiner with a quick overview of the subjects' background, it occasionally provided a clue for a profitable direction for the interview. All of the subjects resented the questionnaire, and all made the same complaint, that it did not allow for the expression of their ambiguity in certain areas. When the complaint was made, the interviewer responded by asking the subject to elaborate on the point, which the subject always did. Hence the questionnaire also had a catalytic effect on the interview. The questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

Throughout the process of gathering the data, I was constantly aware of the criticism frequently made against personal interview as a research tool, namely, that it is a subjective instrument, and the likelihood is strong that subjective and unconscious motivations of both the researcher and the subject may tend to contaminate the results. In an effort to minimize this effect, we again turn to Murray to alert us to the specific factors which may interfere with a true avowal of sentiments. The factors

in the situation with the researcher are:²⁴

1. The examiner fails to create a situation which engages the interest and full participation of the subject.
2. The examiner fails to inspire the respect and trust of the subject.
3. The purpose of the session is to judge the subject's fitness for a position.
4. The topic of the question has a high collective cathexis.
5. The situation involved an audience or the examiner fails to provide sufficient guarantees of anonymity.
6. The examiner gives the impression of being a man with strong sentiments.
7. The procedure does not seem suitable to the purpose as defined.
8. The question is beyond the scope of the subject.
9. The question is vague, general or ambiguous.
10. The wording of the question introduces irrelevant elements.
11. The question is worded in such a way as to indicate the answer.
12. The nature of the preceding question establishes a set.

In addition to these elements in the climate which the researcher establishes, the subject himself may bring to the situation certain factors which interfere with the true avowal of sentiment. Murray lists these possible factors:

1. The subject has a strong need for conformance.
2. The subject has a strong need for autonomy.
3. The subject has a strong need to modify all answers.
4. The subject tends to be resistive and argumentative.
5. The subject has other needs such as the need for self-consistency, rationality, compliance.

²⁴Murray, "A Clinical Study of Sentiments," Genetic Psychology Monographs.

6. The subject has little capacity to inspect and faithfully report his own affective states.
7. The subject cares little, or knows little, about the topic.
8. The subject comes to the session in an exceptional affective state.
9. The subject may insist on generalizing.
10. The subject may have some bad associations to the question.
11. The subject may have a negative attitude toward the examiner.

It is my feeling that contamination of the data was minimal, that the thoughts and feelings of the subjects, who were eager to share their private world, and were even grateful that someone was interested, came through with clarity.

CHAPTER III

CASE STUDIES

I. NANCY

Present Description

The subject is a 23 year old, single caucasian girl. She lives at home with her mother and her two half sisters who are both younger than she. Her mother was divorced six years ago. They live in a nice house in a pleasant section of the city. Nancy is now beginning college with enthusiasm and high hopes. She is a bright girl who expresses herself well, and could be moderately attractive if she took more care with her appearance.

Nancy has a long and involved history of attempts at therapy, starting when she was 15. She sees herself as an extremely unhappy person who is engaged in a constant and difficult battle to keep from killing herself. She is a dope addict, frequently goes out on drunks, engages in prostitution to earn money for drugs, and participates in various other kinds of anti-social behavior. She has been in prisons and hospitals, and is bitter about the experiences. She sees herself as basically homosexual, but gets no pleasure from any sexual activity.

Nancy was referred to the Suicide Prevention Center as the terms of her parole after serving a year on a narcotics charge.

Suicidal History

One day I'll put a needle
Right into my vein
One day of freedom baby
I'll fix Death in my main

I'll nod and flash--then fall out
Dead on the clean white floor
And from that lonely bathroom scene
Nancy will hurt no more. . . .

Nancy cannot remember a time when she did not want to die. Some of her earliest memories include such expressions of self-destruction as burning herself with matches, cutting herself, carving letters on her body, sewing her fingers together, beating herself until she bled, covering one eye and trying to read at night. At the age of eight she drank Drano. Since that time she has attempted suicide through wrist cutting, hanging, sleeping pills and narcotics. Many of these attempts were near fatal, and on one occasion she was pronounced dead and only a heart massage saved her life.

She has personified death and has strong erotic feelings about him (sometimes her). She sees Death as her only friend, the only one who understands and loves her. At the same time, he is her enemy who calls upon her to stop the struggle for life and accept the peace of earth.

For Nancy, there is no precipitating crisis that triggers an impulse to suicide. Instead there is a life long struggle to stay alive, and the moment by moment

necessity for decision whether or not she will kill herself.

The method of choice is an overdose of heroin, which is easily available to her. She does not want a death that will mutilate her body or cause her agony. She wants a death of beauty and pleasure--a firm denial of a life of ugliness and pain. She is constantly on the threshold of death, and for her life's main struggle is to stay alive.

If you think you "understand" how I feel
then
drink a million gallon bottles of wine alone
hide the empty bottles--
shake out each and every hangover and live every
hallucination--
sleep in a few Drunk tanks
And we'll talk

You "Know how I feel" do you--
sit in a thousand bars broke
without even a cigarette or a place to sleep--
have your stomach hurt from hunger--
mix that with quite a few old-fat-beefy men
pawing at your breasts--
then fuck them
get your money--
and you might know how I feel

My life is all ahead of me--you say--
pass out in a few
alleys of broken bottles
vomit downtown on the street in broad daylight--
beg for a quarter from a stranger--
and sleep in a bus station
then we can talk

I've been hurt--you tell me
and I tell you this
sit in the living room sometime and listen to your
mother
fuck a few strangers--
and you'll understand pain--
Have your own father try to fuck you--
your grandmother call you by the other name--
and

force you to wear a set of wedding rings your Aunt
wore
when her husband murdered her
Then we can talk about unhappiness

And when it's all over, and you're 23 years old--
and you've sat in grey-green day rooms
in three mental hospitals
slit your wrists--
overdosed 11 times
and begged for a fix
been to hell and back
and live for nothing
Then you'll understand--
and we'll talk
if you're still
alive.

Early Background

Nancy's mother and father were divorced after a marriage of less than a year, before she was born. Her mother remarried when Nancy was about one year old, and her step-father adopted her immediately.

The relationship between Nancy and her step-father appears to be the crucial one of her life. On the surface, a calm, passive gentleman of ample means and courtly manners whom everyone liked and admired, he was in his relationship to his step-daughter a sadist of almost unbelievable proportions. Stories of his cruelty flow from her in an unending stream. They range from incidents of overt and open brutality to the most cunning concealed double binds. Wondering how much of the stories are fact and how much are fantasy, the researcher spoke with Nancy's therapist who has been in contact with her mother. The

stories are verified by her. At one time the father consulted with a psychiatrist who then called Nancy and her mother in and cautioned them that the father was at times psychotic and fully capable of murder. It was following this that the mother gained a divorce.

The story of Nancy's relationship to her step-father can best be told in her own words. In discussing her feelings of her own unworthiness she says:

My father just set this thing in motion I guess, like I'm a no-good machine, he convinced me I was no good and everything I've done has proved that.

Th: Was your father this way toward everyone?

S: No. that was the thing, that's the catch. You see, if my father was a drunk and came home and beat all the kids, we'd all suffer from the same sort of rejection, probably, but he singled me out, like--he'd take everyone in the family out and leave me home . . . From the time I was a baby, everything I did was wrong. I was born out of sinful blood and all this stuff. He singled me out, you know, and he would never kiss me in my whole life, he'd never pick me up, the only time he'd touch me was if he'd hit me. But he was never this way to the other kids.

Even today it is the same. He will contact the other children, and invite them out, but never Nancy. He never mentions her name.

He just stopped talking to me . . . In his mind I just don't exist.

The "double bind" quality of the relationship was evidenced in many ways. On the one hand:

Everyone used to think my father was the nicest man because he was well mannered, generous, ingratiating--everyone liked him.

but behind the "niceness" was another side:

He used to get up in the night and eat ice cream and they always blamed me, and I'd get a spanking--he'd get up and they'd spank me for it, and nobody would ever believe me but he'd get up in the night and eat it. This sounds like it couldn't be true, but it is.

(at the dinner table I'd say) "Would you pass the salt?" He wouldn't answer. "Would you pass the salt?" and he pretended like I wasn't there, and he'd look right at me, and I'd say "Would you pass the salt, Would you pass the salt?"

"Oh, well, if you're going to scream at me . . ." You know, it would just enrage me.

At one time Nancy's grandmother (her father's mother) visited them, and offered to help Nancy with her homework--the only one who showed any interest in her school work:

She went back East and died, and he told me I killed her because I bothered her so much about my homework that I made her have a heart attack.

At other times the subtle nature of his cruelty would change and he would attack her in more open ways. In her early childhood the family lived in a hilly area and the way to the home was up a steep canyon road. Because both the mother and father worked, Nancy was left in the care of a family at the foot of the hill. Each day her father would pick her up and drive her home. He would demand absolute silence from her, saying:

"If you don't be quiet I'll drive off the cliff." What kind of way is that to treat a child--a grown man. I can remember being terrified driving up that canyon . . . He used to hold me out and slap me, and

of course I couldn't reach him and hit back. Things like that.

Some of the conflict between father and daughter took place around questions of religious beliefs and practices. The father was Jewish, and apparently resented the fact that his wife and daughter were not.

My father was one of these sort of religious fanatics, not a fanatic really, but everything is sinful and, you know, women are nasty and bad, and you know, everything is dirty . . .

She recalls one incident, while she was in grade school when she began to cook her own breakfast--neither parent ever performed this task for her. She was cooking bacon, when her father awoke and came into the kitchen. He discovered that she was using his Kosher pan and flew into a rage, beat her with the pan and then took it into the backyard to bury it--raging at her for defiling it.

Another incident took place when she had a girlfriend spend the night with her. The next day was Sunday and the friend was going to attend Mass. Nancy was very interested and accepted the invitation to attend with her. She announced the fact the next morning. The father was willing to drive the friend, but refused Nancy permission to attend:

I was going, so excited. He asked me where I was going, and I told him. He said:

"You're not going."

"Please let me go" and we had a big fight. He drove

the car--taking her--and I said, "I'm going if I have to walk." He said, "O.K. you can walk." He drive the car right along next to me--there I was trotting, running, he'd never go--just pull away. He just made me trot two miles to church and kept saying, "Go back where you belong." You know, and here she's sitting in the car and he drove right along side of me, like you've seen people leash their dogs on the outside, he just let me run alongside of the car. This is the kind of man he was.

During the Christmas Holidays the family was thrown in turmoil. The mother wanted to observe the holidays in the traditional ways but the father, while not forbidding it, made his opposition felt.

Nancy recalls one Easter her father flew into a rage and smashed the Easter Eggs her mother had prepared. He permitted a Christmas Tree in the house, but refused to enter the living room as long as it was there. On Christmas morning, while the rest of the family opened the gifts, the father would lie in bed moaning with a headache until the ceremony was over, and then remain withdrawn for the rest of the day.

Another early memory will serve to throw important light on this father-daughter relationship, and we will allow Nancy to tell us of it in her own words:

My mother went away to the hospital to have Carol, and I remember, I was up there in this house, I can remember looking out and seeing, you know, the trees and everything, and I remember I was up to this window-pane, I was looking out, and I remember my father lying in this double bed saying, "You have to come to bed now, you have to come to bed." And I remember I had this revulsion for him, I can remember wanting to stay up late, just not wanting to get in that bed with

him. And I don't remember anything else.

The incident took place when she was four and the possible significance of that night will be discussed later.

Faced with these difficulties, Nancy responded with withdrawal, and strong feelings of hostility and self hate. When she tells these stories of her father, the anger and rage she feels reflects strongly in her voice. But when we asked her directly what her feelings toward her father are today, she became depressed and wistful:

I don't even blame him anymore, because he was sick and he made me sick. He put the worse kind of self hate in me that you can put.

About the age of nine, a new element came into Nancy's life. She tells of it in this way:

Finally one day we were having a religious argument, I never knew I was adopted, I mean, I knew they didn't want me and I fell outside the family, but I just figured I was bad. And my mother told me I didn't have to worry about it because I wasn't Jewish anyway, he wasn't my father. So that's when I started to have my fantasies about my father . . . I used to think that he loved me. That I could go and live with him and he'd love me so much, that he'd waited all-- that he'd wondered where I was. And I thought about it for years, and I started to drink when I was 15, you know, every night I was drinking, well, I suppose I was a problem drinker even then. I remember sitting in bars just thinking, just thinking, getting drunk. Things were more real to me when I was getting drunk. He would love me, and we'd be partners and we'd be friends, and maybe when I'd come home from school he'd pick me up and kiss me and love me and you know, that he's living somewhere and he'd, you know, love me-- just love me, I guess.

Now she had a new way to handle a cruel, rejecting

father. She had her fantasy life, and that somewhere there was a good father who loved her. Her fantasies became more real to her than reality, and she used first alcohol and then dope to aid her in her retreat from a painful life into the comfort and warmth of her own fantasies.

When she was 18, she decided to trace her real father. She found him after a few months. He was an alcoholic who lived in a trailer on the edge of a small town in Arizona. He was not steadily employed, and lived in squalor. Upon the arrival of his daughter, he took her to the nearest bar, got drunk, and tried to seduce her. She left, without consenting and has never heard from him again. She has little to say about the experience, as if she knew she should have expected it from the beginning:

Funny, though, the thing that's funny is that neither of my fathers ever wondered what happened to me. You'd think that even if he didn't love me, he'd have curiosity, or even my step-father. That both of them deny my existence . . .

Now she feels that she can never love a man. They are too untrustworthy, but she also feels:

My need is insatiable and none can ever fill it. I try not to need anybody.

The Mother-Daughter Relationship

I am the sound of Jazz lost to the agitated listener who is afraid to stop and think--afraid to be different

or to turn the station of Rock and Roll conformity to the communication of soul and solitude.

I am a Wiffit card hiding under a pile of magazines, books and letters waiting for someone to find and understand my elfish qualities.

I am a cold day at the beach--the day only the true lovers appreciate the waves of my sea crash and cry.

I am a small but meaningful detail in a painting waiting for someone to look past the big thing and notice.

I am a book of poetry by unknown author living quietly on the shelf in the garish Library of Life--waiting to be read.

I am an old man shuffling down the busy L.A. street--unloved and not remembered by anyone, but full of a simple joy waiting to be felt.

I am the sorrow of yesterday--the feeling no one wants to recall.

I am a lonely glass of wine waiting to comfort and warm a cold and tired person.

I am the still-born child of some mother's hopes, dreams and tears.

Nancy's mother is a very attractive woman who has artistic talent as a sculptress, and is now beginning to make some money from her art. Divorced now, for six years, she dates frequently, but has made no attempt to remarry. She dedicates the major portion of her time taking care of Nancy, doing what she can to protect her daughter from herself.

Nancy sees their present relationship as a good one, certainly the most important one she has. Her mother is friend, sister, nurse and caretaker to her:

She and I go to bars now, and drink and pick up guys. Now I'm older, after all we've been through, it's, you know, really funny because we'll go pick up guys and we'll call each other gay, or I'll get a little loaded and I'll turn to her and say "Mummy" (laughs), "What did you say?" (the men reply). You know, we have this kind of relationship, You know, I'll tell her that I went to bed with so-and-so and he was pretty good, you know.

And yet, she'll pick me upon her lap and rock me and call me her little girl. I mean, she tells me, "You're like a four year old girl, Nancy," and I know I am, and I know I need to be treated like one, and I feel guilty about it . . . But I am four, part of me is four, and I need to be loved and I need to be babied, like my sister who's 13 and she calls me her little sister.

Nancy has strong sexual feelings for her mother and has great difficulty in handling them:

I have sort of a sexual feeling for her, you might say. Sometimes I can't face it, and sometimes I block it out, sometimes I'm not aware of it but I know that I have it. I don't talk about it very much, but it bothers me, like sometimes she'll say, "come and sleep with me," and I'll feel very uncomfortable--like, attracted to her, like I don't like to be around her when she takes a bath and when she walks around with nothing on, I don't know, I feel guilty, of course I feel terrible about it. I don't know if she encourages it or not.

She summarizes her feelings about her mother like this:

I think of my mother as the most wonderful, kind, beautiful, loving person in the world. I know this--if my mother left me alone I would die. Nobody else would do what she does.

The two have not always been in such harmony, however. When I first inquired into the relationship, the conversation began like this:

I love my mother more than anybody else in the world--but I think a lot of my problems came from my mother.

What kind of person is she?

I don't know how to begin. When I was little I hated her. When I was in my teens I hated her, I ran away. I'd go to the neighbors next door to get away from her. I boarded out when I was in high school . . . I hated her.

Then she began to relate how her mother would run around with other men and bring them home. They would go into the bedroom and leave Nancy in the living room, and she would hear noises. As she was telling this, she was overcome with a sense of guilt. She couldn't understand the feeling but she felt dirty and guilty talking about her mother this way.

In the early years, the mother seldom concerned herself about her daughter, never "joined the PTA" or joined in school activities. Nancy remembers being told many times:

The trouble with you is your mother, get away from your mother . . . But if I can't believe my mother, who can I believe?

The change in the relationship apparently came when the mother entered "psychoanalysis."

Nancy's mother had a difficult childhood as well. She came from a home with a brutal father and a rejecting mother. Her sister married a man who murdered her. Soon after this happened, Nancy began spending some nights with her grandmother. She recalls that the grandmother would have spells when she would call Nancy by the

murdered girl's name. One day she gave Nancy the dead
girl's wedding ring and made her wear it.

Make time stop--
suspend atoms in space
because
I'm so sad
with
the
sadness of life--
of
people
of the loved and the hated--
Make it all go
because
Mary is sad--lost
because
John
is
confused--unhappy--questioning life
Blank it all out
because
Basil
has
a needle--
Danny has LSD
because
Dr. Smith failed--
because I know too many sad people--
I
see too much beauty--
I hurt
they hurt--
we
all hurt--
fear
flight
and
dreams
Take it back God--
We don't know how to use Life--

History of Religiosity

O Shrine of Self-Destruction
I bow with bended head
I kneel and ask for Mercy
Without you I am dead

I offer you a sacrifice
I pledge to you my soul
Your power and your might
Can heal and make me whole

I stand before your Alter
O Great God of Dope
I know your Priest of Tyranny
And Agony your Pope

I light your Candle of Slavery
It fills and lights the room
Dispelling all my memories
Removing all the gloom

I glance up at your Alter
Your cross the Spike and Spoon
The statue is of Heroin
The flower a baloon

Oh gleaming silver needle
Without you I'm insane
I reach for you in frenzy
To plunge into my vein

Now I thank you God of Plenty
I thank you God of Dope
I praise your wonderous powers
To fulfill and give us hope

There's nothing to say
when I confess,
nothing to do
when I repent;
nothing to live
when I regress--
nothing to know--
I was hell-bent.

Nancy's religious search did not take the form of organized religion. Although, as we shall see, she has strong feelings about God and prayer, and the necessity and desire for a sense of meaning and purpose in life, although she struggles for some ultimate commitment that will sustain her and bring some meaning and value into her life, her searching has not brought her into any meaningful contact with a religious structure.

Although she knows that her father is not a fair representative of Judaism, still the beating from the Kosher pan stings. Once, while in prison she moved close to Roman Catholicism, only to be rebuffed by the priest who told her that her death wish was a sin. Her mother was a nominal Protestant with a strong sentimental feeling for certain holidays, but she never offered her daughter the door of religion.

If we must label her faith at all, we must call her a high priestess of a death cult. This faith is far from satisfying, but it is the best she has been able to find--it is her faith, complete with prayers of despair, sacraments of heroin, hope of annihilation, and a warm loving black god.

Present Religious Posture

God: Nancy voices a variety of feelings and thoughts about God. At times she appears bitter and angry:

If life is just an endurance contest because you're to go to hell, then there couldn't be a God. You know what I mean? What's so beautiful about living in--if there's a God he wouldn't let people be so miserable that they want to die yet make them live or you can't go to heaven. If he's that way, then I'd better go to hell.

Other times, she's apathetic and discouraged:

I have no feelings about God one way or the other, I mean, I do but--when it gets that bad--I suppose it's important, I don't even know.

But for the most part, Nancy does not stop with an intellectual discussion about the existence of God. She wants God to be real and effective; she cries to him out of her helplessness and despair:

I felt that if I had to be an addict I'd rather be dead. I'd rather be dead. Even if the police never came after me never in life, I don't want to live that way, I don't want to be sick, I don't want to turn tricks, I don't want to wait on corners, I don't want to sit in rooms, my head on my chest. It's like, it's like, let me be free or let me (die). How can there be God, you just tell me, how can there be God? I say, Oh God, please help me--everytime I'm sick--please don't let me do it, please help me, please show me the way, please take the obsession away, please, please, please.

Well, I used to think, if only, if I could, like I've gone to churches and prayed, and begged, this desperate --not for anything, just, God please help me, just, please help me not to want to fix, please help me--want to live, or--make it so I can stand it, or I don't know, maybe it wasn't a prayer, maybe it was a cry--just a cry, a "Why"?

I don't know, I remember one time, I don't know why I did it, I was down on the beach and I was having a--I lived with a girl for a couple of years and she was beating me up, and I ran out on the street and some guys picked me up on the street--she was chasing me and they got me in the car and they started to rape me,

and I jumped out of the car, they let me out on the beach--you know, after a big hazzle and everything, I fought my way out--they felt sorry for me, let me out.

I was walking down the beach, down in Venice, all--you know--feeling pretty good, and I walked into a synagogue--it was just like I couldn't stand it anymore, I mean I had always not held it against the Jewish religion, I know my father wasn't a typical example of the Jewish religion, but I just went in there and got on my hands and knees and cried--Why, please help me, why is everything, why is everything so horrible and, you know--Why? If there is a God, why is it like this, and why don't you help me. Like that, what is it, and I never got an answer. I didn't expect the sky to open or anything, but like when I was in the joint, I thought, well I'd try to join the Catholic Church. I went to religious instruction twice a week, and I started to go to mass, and I used to go talk to the priest--it was comforting to me--like the priest was--like maybe there was a God. And when I told him I wanted to die . . . he told me it was a sin, you know, I felt like nobody in the world could understand how sad I was.

And if God won't help her in life--toward life--then she appeals to him for death:

I have cried to God, but it's more like--I can remember so many times crying, even as a child, "God, I can't live anymore." "Please God let me die." I think every night of my whole life I went to bed and said, "Please God let me die, let me die in my sleep, please, please."

It's like, if God were God, and he were kind, he'd let me die. That's my prayer. I guess I told that to the priest and he said that's a sin. But I believed that if I prayed hard enough--I'd just die.

I don't consider myself religious, but the more I think about death, the more I think about God, but my God is a God where--maybe God to me is death. I don't know, mercy, peace, I just don't want anymore, I'm too tired.

Nancy is a writer. When God turns his back, and men do too, she goes out to the garage in the back of her house and shuts and locks the door. Then she begins to drink--a cheap wine--and as she drinks she writes.

She calls this experience, "weird, really weird." It is a kind of temple in the locked garage out behind the house. She is not a writer, she says, what she writes is her. What God and man cannot understand or accept, the paper can.

Just prior to her last serious suicide attempt she wrote a play, and recorded the unspoken thoughts of a girl:

Why don't they see it, why, I'm dying. I won't make it, I'm going to run, run, run, run,--run nowhere to nothing. I'm going to live in a small room and drink and take dope and dance and laugh and then I'm going to die. But they don't see it.

I'm afraid, I wish I were dead, maybe I'm crazy, yeah, I'm a nut, that's it and nobody knows it cause I'm so fucking smart.

God loves me. He does. I'm just a little girl, I'm only four. God loves me. I want to die. I hate this place, the men, the drinks, the music. I'm sick. I'm scared, but I can't show it. No one knows. They think I swing.

How did I get here, why can't I be like other people, why? Fuck it. Who cares? They'll be sorry. I'll blow my fucking brains out in their clinic. I'll laugh when I do it, they just don't understand I have to die. I can't make it. I'll show them despair, really suicidal . . .

But after all the anger, fear, frustration, tears; after all the drunks, all the kicks; after all the trying and failing; after all the denials, invectives, attacks,

there still remains a small child of four:

I guess I must believe there's a God. But sometimes, all the things I've been through, I wonder. And yet, when I get close to death, I know there's a God. But I know God is just peace and mercy. And I believe God loves me. God doesn't say "She's a whore, she's a hype." God knows I'm a little girl, I just want to go away where they won't hurt me anymore.

Death and Afterlife

And in Summer
walk among lilacs--
daisies
and
death
Sing softly thru
my
death
my
peace--
Walk slowly youth
thru
this
graveyard
of the very old--
and the very young--

In Autumn's awe
contemplate
the
red-yellow sad leaves
of
life--Bring me pressed
Spring flowers--
lay them
quietly on my breast
cry softly
and
walk away before
the sun sets
sadly, slowly
for summer days

In Winter
know I'm
warm--
though snow and rain
beat upon
my
coffin--
kill the earth life
the
flower from my dead
heart--
I remain warm

But in Spring--
remember
life--laughter--
remember
dancing
incoherent
mad
sad
happy
Spring--
remember
Nancy....
Death's Child....

To speak to Nancy is to speak about death. Death
is peace, it is beauty, it is a lover, it is a sanctuary,

it is the arch enemy. To speak to her about death is to speak about something most precious, most delicate. Death is her destiny--not only death, but suicide.

The feeling I have about dying is not that I want to die, but that I'm going to die. Do you understand that? Not that I don't want to die, but today I don't want to die, I want to live, today I want to fight, but it's like a feeling inside--not a feeling, but like a wall inside, a brick wall and I back into it and I know I'm going to die, I know that I'm going to kill myself, and I don't know when and I don't know where, but I just, I've known it all my life--when I was little I knew it.

How will she do it?

I've thought of all sorts of ways, all sorts of ways. I go to bed at night and it just goes through my mind like a record that I want to rip out of my mind but I can't. I just can't get it out of my head.

But whatever way will be decided upon, this much she knows, that it must be a death of beauty. After one serious suicide attempt she regained consciousness in a hospital and still wanted to die, resenting the efforts of those trying to save her:

I had a dream, in a nice beautiful house, cleaning it up, taking a bath, putting my make up on, lying down taking sleeping pills and going to sleep in beauty.

People say, "Why don't you blow your brains out?" Well, people who have an obsession about death also have a way they want to go, maybe you know. I didn't want to live in violence and filth and pain, I wanted to live in peace. And since there was no peace for me, I didn't want to die in filth and pain with my guts all over, you know, my one last thing was--"let me lie down beautifully and go to sleep."

For a time, she thought about hiring someone to kill her. That way she wouldn't know when it was coming and

would be easier:

But that scares me too much, I want to do it myself, I don't want to be murdered.

Th: How come?

S: It's an act of love to myself--suicide. Murder is an act of violence. That's like letting the world hurt me, and I won't anymore. The thing about me is, I wanted to die, but I didn't want to hurt myself, I didn't want to hurt.

Sometimes, for Nancy, death is an escape from a cruel and meaningless life. Describing another serious attempt:

I was laughing because here was the beach and here was the world, and I felt like I'd outsmarted them because they couldn't hurt me anymore. I was hysterically laughing and talking, talking and telling them "Here I come, and I know exactly what I was doing, I knew exactly what I was doing, I'm not afraid to die. I'm afraid to live, I'm afraid to live, I'm not afraid to die . . . I want to go away where they can't hurt me anymore.

Nancy is more comfortable with death than with life, she understands it in a way that she doesn't understand life:

I'm more dead than alive . . . We're in a struggle everyday to stay alive . . . It never dawned on me until I came into therapy that my thoughts were unnatural, it never dawned on me that everyone didn't want to die. When people say to me, "Why do you want to die?" my question is, "Why do you want to live?"

I'm ashamed that so many people are sick and suffering and want to live and I want to die. But I can't help it. It's like they should be able--I used to work in a hospital and I used to be with people I knew were going to die, and used to just--I've seen people die. I've wheeled them down to the morgue, you know, and my only feeling was--this is before my last attempt--

I would be crying, why God, why can't you take my life and let them live when they have something to live for, and I want to die so bad. You know, like I've seen--I've seen the light go out of there, I've seen the light go right out of their face, I've seen people die. I can tell the spark that leaves when they die, and all I've wished is, "Why can't it be me, why can't I die."

But far more characteristically for Nancy, Death is the lover that waits for her and beckons to her to join him. He is her comfort, her one good friend who is always with her.

Death to me is--somebody said in the group one time death to them is self-hate. My death is, I want to kill myself so that I can't be hurt anymore. Death is to me beautiful--beautiful and peaceful. I write poetry, I write poems. "Death my lover" . . . I'm better, but I'm still not out of it. Not too long ago I was sitting in the waiting room and I just felt death standing next to me, with his hand on my shoulder comforting me.

There is a reality about Death, he is a person who loves her.

. . . I had a vision or something, I don't know, an hallucination or something. It was a long thing, but it culminated: I was walking down this corridor, I was just walking, this warm light came down like this on either side of me, and this hand came down, not down to me, but down. And this voice said to me "You can come home now, you've suffered enough." And I wasn't afraid, I didn't feel--I mean I really felt that's what was happening.

I have this thing about death standing next to me with his hand on me--comforting . . . He's a man in a robe, in a dark robe, he has no face but he has a very gentle hand and he has wings, like--I've heard the flapping.

I've written poems like: "Why do men fear you so Oh Angel of Death, don't they know the flapping of your wings mean peace?"

I mean it. I'm not just being poetic or anything. It's just somebody very comforting. It's like my lover. I'm having a love affair with Death. (When I come to the SPC) it's like we were having marital counseling or something.

(If) they took death away from me and didn't give me anything to hang onto, this is what I felt--like Death cares (for me)--I know.

I was wandering around dead, I didn't want anybody to love me anymore. I didn't want to love, I didn't want to be loved. I'd go sit in bars and drink cokes, and men would come up and try to pick me up and like I'd say--like this guy would come up and say, "Is anyone sitting here?" And I'd say, "Yeah, don't you see him?"

I'd just listen to jazz, you know. There's a lot of places they know me, I used to go around to all these colored bars and sit around. No one would ever bother me. I don't know--they just knew.

Then I'd go and sit in my car, and I always went alone. I mean, I'd given up that anyone could ever love me, Death was my lover, you understand? . . . Nobody could love me, I was married, you understand that? I was promised, I was engaged. I'd have no feeling about anything at all except this great sadness.

Whenever Nancy speaks of death, she speaks with an intensity, an emotional involvement that carries the ring of authenticity. At times she speaks poetically, but this is no pretense for her. She is speaking of her life and her death.

But there is another side:

It's like I'm in a marathon. It's a miracle I'm alive this long--that I've lived 23 years, you know, that I lived 23 years wanting to die. But the thing about dying is I also think I want to live as much as I want to die.

What is it that contradicts the death wish? What

does life mean to her, and why does she cling to it in defiance of her love affair with death?

The Meaning and Purpose of Life

I have a book-mark
with
no more books
to be read
I have a shadow--
a
feeling of
being dead
I have a lover--
who
knows
of
truth
and
pain--
I had a life to live
and
I
spent it
all in
vain
I have a feeling--
a sort of wind inside
I have a darkness
And no where to
hide . . .

From the beginning, Nancy's life has been one of extreme hardship and agony. Suffering at the cruel hands of a psychotic father, not receiving much help from her troubled mother, her life has been a constant struggle, a constant flight from a terrible Reality.

Her fantasies betrayed her, the escape of alcohol and heroin turned into terrible prisons, she can't turn to men and she's ashamed of turning to women for the love

she yearns for, yet never receives in sufficient quantities.

Yet, at least up to now, life has been worth the struggle to her or she would be dead. She, too, wonders why it should be but she recognizes this:

I'm on a search.

Th: A search for what?

S: I was sitting in my living room, and I was very sad. I was looking out at the sky and there was a birch tree, and I was looking out and I was saying--what's it all about God--why? Why is my mother sad, and why doesn't my sister have a father and why do people die? I could put up with all this crap if there were a reason . . . My life to me, Nancy, has no meaning.

Her poetic expression sounds like this:

O Great Sad Mellow hurting sky
 help me understand
 let me see the Why
 in all this angry earth that I have suffered so
 help me know the reason
 or lonely let me go.

As she looks at her life now, she says that many of life's pleasures are closed to her. She feels that she'll never be able to marry. Her monosexuality and her active past would disqualify her from any "decent" people. But she no longer looks for happiness--which she once defined as:

The lack of absolute, total anguish.

But there is another goal for her:

. . . Even if I'm not happy, there's some reason for my existence if I can help other people--it's the only meaning I have . . . Maybe if I had something

to live for, I wouldn't have to take drugs.

She had her first experience at "helping people" while in prison. It was an important moment in her life when she discovered that:

There were people who came to me, and I realized that helping people--that I can help people, people are attracted to me. I've always sort of wanted to do this, but figured it was a loss . . .

While still in prison, she began to work with this feeling:

If, like, they--if they could take, say, mentally deficient children instead of having us work in the yard crew, which the men do, they ought to have these children who have no parental love and have us take care of them, give someone a reason for living, I think the only rehabilitation is in learning to love someone.

. . . The only reason I want to live is to try to help somebody else . . . Even if I never get to be a doctor, I'm going to keep on helping people.

Sometimes even this seems hopeless to her:

You know, once I'm locked up the only hope I have is maybe by something I do somebody else will learn something, and that's such a stupid thing, it's like, maybe if I talk to you maybe they'll learn something about suicide . . .

I've donated my poetry to the suicide center, but maybe they don't even care, maybe my whole life didn't mean anything in any respect.

And what's so wonderful even if I did help somebody else, and I have to die myself, what kind of a world is it when nobody can help you, even when they want to. When all the best doctors in the world can't help.

You know, I'm 23 years old, I'm not going to be around much longer if I have to live like this. I've tried for a long time.

But at other times, it's worth the struggle:

Do you know what I want to do? I want to be a doctor, I want to be a doctor and work with suicidals, because I know. That's the only thing I want to live for because I've figured, everyway I look, I'll never be able to get married, I'll never be able to have a relationship with a woman that will last, but the only thing I've got going for me, the only reason I have to want to live is maybe the things I've gone through, if I cannot die, and not use (dope) and not all these things, get through school.

I have something to give, and I know I didn't read it in a book, I know how he feels, and I can really help people, if I can make it myself. And if I can't do that, for myself I don't care--and I'm not saying I'm God, I'm just saying that it would help me to have a reason to live. It would give me something too, because my life is meaningless to me.

(as of now) it's the only important thing in my life . . . I've got to feel like I'm good somehow, somewhere I'm worth something.

Nancy is on a search for some meaning in her life, some purpose, some justification to make it all worthwhile.

I'd rather be a good dope fiend, than just a nobody, because I have so much inside, I think . . . I have so much to say and express that I can't stand the thought of working away in some menial little job and wanting to die all the time and fighting all these feelings and being on parole and, you know. Either I want to be somebody important and help other people or I want to be dead . . . Not "important," I chose the wrong word, important in that I'm meaningful--that my fucking life has some meaning.

I don't know if I'm helping you by just talking about myself. I really do want to help you, I really want to help--God, if I could only get the tools.

And for this end she has enrolled in college in order to gain the "tools" to utilize what she sees as her

unique insight into the suffering human soul. When she feels good, it looks like she'll make it:

I want to live. I want to want to live. I want life to mean something to me. And it's beginning to. I've got--I don't know, courage or faith or hope or something, because they've been good to me here (SPC).

Relationship to Humanity

My humor and tragedy
are combined--
my life itself
is a mass
of both;
a combination
a fulfillment
and lack--
a merging of
life and death
I am
because I am all
and nothing.
I am too much--
I am with
and without--
I am hurt,
therefore
I am
with all--
alone. . . .

At times, Nancy sees herself as being totally isolated. The times she sits in a bar alone, or in her car contemplating a Death who cares, or when locked in her own garage getting drunk--at these times she is a person apart, lonely and frightened.

But at other times she courageously moves out into the world and makes determined efforts at claiming her

portion of life. It's very important for her that people understand the struggle she's going through. She hates the isolation, and seeks involvement, but it's a difficult struggle. Her image of the difficulty is this:

I can't even let anyone get close to me because--I have this balance. It's like I'm a million years old and nobody understands, and I can't even communicate . . .

I guess it's like, being hurt and being rejected, I withdrew as a child into a castle with a mote and a drawbridge. After a long period of trying to reach out and being kicked, you know, it took a long time for me to go into the castle--you know, I wasn't born in a castle with a mote and a drawbridge.

I let the drawbridge down many, many times--trying to let somebody in and--but it hurts to the point where I pull the drawbridge up and never let it down, and hope that somebody someday would find their way through the maze of thorns and find the drawbridge and find the button and come in.

And now it's like, I'm in this prison I made myself--you know what I mean. The ivy has grown over the wall and even on the inside, so that even if I want to let anybody in, I can't remember where the button is.

I feel that Dr. Smith can hear me scream from out there where he is. He's the only thing in the world I hang onto. And I lose touch with him often . . .

On the other hand, when she walks through Pershing Square, or some sections of the Watts' area, and she sees hungry, suffering people, she feels her heart bleed for them. Frequently, she'll buy them a meal, not so much to fill their stomachs, but so they'll know that someone knows, and understands, and cares.

She identifies with the lost and the anguished.

She feels she understands them as no one else does, especially the addicts and the suicidals. She is a part of this humanity, but feels strangely separated from her own cultural group.

Capacity for Commitment

The sound of your voice
 pulled me
 from the
 edge
 of
 destruction
 The tone of your concern
 made
 the
 difference
 of
 Life and Death
 I believe in you--
 my destiny is in your hands
 Help me forget the pain I hold so close--
 the fat, sloppy middle-aged tricks that pumped
 their loneliness
 into
 my
 youth
 help me forget the sex of the needle
 devouring my will to care
 Help me forget Death and all the promises of
 peace
 and
 beauty
 Please help me. . . .

This is the feeling I have about everything. I've been in so many bars and been with so many people, and been in so many hospitals, and nothing is ever constant in my life, always searching and going on and--I feel like nothing will ever be constant--that I'll just drift from one bar and one hotel room and one bathroom and one bed to another. The only thing that can help me stop drinking and stop wanting to fix is, if I can become a doctor and help other people--otherwise I don't give a God damn--and I'll kill myself.

If Nancy can commit herself to the one cause she has found, she feels she will be saved. She is committed to being committed; whether or not she will be able to do it, is a question that has not yet been answered, but this much she knows: an uncommitted life is not worth living.

What will it take for Nancy to successfully pursue her religious quest? Perhaps she herself provides the answer. When she fixes, she goes down to Watts. She lives in squalor and self-disgust. She described for me the way it was one weekend during the course of this research.

She felt the need to fix again, a need she could not understand because things were going so well. She was in the room of a whore who was lying on a filthy bed, crying and moaning as she suffered through withdrawal. The room was crowded with people, mostly Negroes. Everyone was fixing. It was wild and noisy, filthy and revolting. A huge Negro man was fixing Nancy, stabbing at her arm recklessly, and the blood was flowing everywhere. She glanced up once and saw a large rat scamper across the floor. The whore's child screamed in its crib.

If you could have seen, if you had a TV screen and could have watched me this weekend, you would have been disgusted.

Then she said:

Maybe I belong there. I sometimes feel like giving in and going down there. Not even starting off where I could and ending up--just going right down to the bottom. Like maybe if I got all the filth and the-- maybe if I went all the way down where I didn't care about anything--and just sunk so low maybe somehow I'd satisfy this thing in me to where all the poison would drain out of me, and someday, if I lived long enough, I'd walk away--just get up and walk out of that and I'd be free--free from all these terrible desires to hurt myself--you understand? If I'd just go along with it and burn it out--like just as if I would drain the blood out of my body with all the poison. You understand? If I'd just go along with it and burn it out, and then just get up and walk away. But it doesn't work that way, because the more you get into it the worse it gets.

What is she saying but that to be well she needs to die and be resurrected. To enter the grave and kill the bad object that plagues her. But it's dangerous treatment, and she knows the danger. Once she embraced death, would he let her go again? Once she killed the bad internalized object, could she find a good introject to sustain her?

Could religious faith help? Can this girl who had two fathers, both of whom denied her existence, find a father who affirms it? She once stated that in the SBC, and specifically in her therapist, she has finally found a good father who cares. But he is outside the castle. She also warns that she will run away from him, to test his power and his love. If he isn't powerful enough to stop her from running--if he isn't powerful enough to contend with the internalized giants and slay them, then

it will be a failure. If he isn't loving enough to make her love, then life is not worth it and she will join the bad fathers who tell her to die.

The author of the 23rd Psalm speaks of walking through the valley of the shadow of death--but with a good father who protects him with his strong rod and staff. Nancy too walks through the valley of death, but without such a father.

My life has been a book that has already been written. The last chapter has already been written, and I've known it. It's like some inevitable end that I have no control over, I really don't, I'm fighting but . . .

Th: Who wrote the book?

S: I don't know if I did, I don't think I did. I don't know, maybe my father.

If one father sealed her fate, perhaps another can open it again. If one father said, "You must die"; perhaps another can say, "I am the resurrection and the life."

But where is this father to come from? Organized religion has not provided her with the help she needs. It has spoken to her of her sinfulness and she hears in its judgments the voice of the fathers who denied her.

Right now, her therapist is her hope:

If you reach out your Hand of Success
and
touch
my loneliness
then, and only then
can I,
or

will I
 try to live.
 I cannot sustain
 any form
 of
 human contact--
 but you can
 and
 will
 I hope . . .
 If I write too much and say too little
 it's
 because
 I'm trying
 I try
 because
 you
 seem
 to care if I live
 YOU
 are the only thing I believe in
 in
 this world of slum's, urine-stained sidewalks
 and
 people who would devour my body and brain
 then cast me aside--
 You build where others
 destroy--
 and care when others show the face of indifference--
 I believe in you
 and
 only
 you. . . .

For Nancy, the existence of God--the good father
 who creates and endorses life, is no academic question.
 It is a matter of life and death.

Bring it back God--
 bring her
 or
 him
 or something--
 Bring it back.
 Let it be God--
 now--tomorrow--
 next week--

make it be something--someone--anything
but oh God
let it be soon.
Make it known to ME--
for
my
future--
so I will live to know I have a future--
Give me the person--
thing
idea
wish
or
dream
that I seemed to have missed, never had--or had and
lost. . . .
Give me a part of life
to
call
myself. . . .

II. HARRY

Present Description

The subject is a 56 year old man who is a homosexual and an alcoholic. Although he has only a high school education, he is fairly intelligent and can carry on conversations on many topics. Throughout his adult life, he has been a constant drinker and a periodic drunk. When he becomes drunk he picks up homosexual partners, loses his job, sometimes spends a few days in jail, and then moves on. When he is sober he is discrete about his sexual life, and it causes him no trouble.

For the last few years, however, he has felt no sex drives at all, and at least for the time being, his homosexuality is causing him no problem. When he called the Suicide Prevention Center, he was finishing a nine month binge during which he spent most of his time in his room alone drinking. There was no homosexual contact during this period.

Professionally he is a hotel man, and this is the only line of work he has engaged in during his adult life. He has worked as everything from a desk clerk to manager of some large hotels from Chicago to Los Angeles. He seems to function well in his work until he gets drunk, brings his homosexual friends into the hotel, gets fired,

and moves on.

During the last nine months he has been unemployed. As a result of the supportive therapy he received at the SPC, however, he now has a job as manager of a L.A. hotel in which he has worked before.

Suicidal History

Harry had never threatened or attempted suicide previously. He had witnessed many suicides in his work in hotels throughout the country, but never felt the temptation to do so himself.

The only incident of suicide in his family is a recollection he has when he was four, of his grandfather trying to jump out of a first story window in an effort to kill himself.

When he called the SPC, he said he was going to kill himself by jumping off the roof of his apartment building. He was a single man, living alone, with no friends and no close family. He was unemployed with no hope of getting a job, and he was close to running out of money. He had been living for nine months on a small inheritance which his mother had left him.

He said that he was used to "dignified" living, and he would certainly kill himself before he would be "degraded" to the point of accepting charity or living on skid row.

Early Background

Harry's early family consisted of a mother, father, older sister, and a grandmother and grandfather. The grandparents died within a few years of one another by the time the subject was 6. He remembers his grandmother's funeral as being a sad but not a tragic occasion.

His father was largely uneducated, but was a successful businessman. He headed a firm which was building houses during the pre-depression years. The houses were sold as fast as he could build them, and he so handled his money that even when the depression hit the family maintained a high standard of living. Harry liked his father but they were never very close.

The mother is seen as a strict, caustic woman with whom nobody could get along very well--nobody but our subject. He speaks of his great love for his mother. He was her favorite and she doted on him.

He has two early memories of his mother. He recalls a blue bathrobe that she had. One day she cut it up and made a pair of shorts for him. He was to wear these to school. The other children made life so unbearable for him, kidding him about his appearance in these shorts, that he begged his mother not to make him wear them. She was insistent, that they could not afford other clothes (this was not true). He took the shorts down to the

basement and burned them in the furnace.

Another memory takes place in a department store. He sees a toy automobile which he wanted very badly. His father was ready to buy it for him, but the mother refused saying they could not afford it. They then went and spent twice as much money on something for the mother. He recalls being livid with rage, but "the feelings shortly drained away. We were really quite close."

The mother dressed Harry in very feminine manner, and he went through torment in school. He was seldom aware of anger toward her but had a severe stuttering problem until he entered high school. He never recalls having heterosexual desires.

To the mother, religion was important. She was a member of a conservative wing of the Luthern Church, and later a member of an even more Fundamentalistic Evangelical Church. She forced the subject to attend Sunday School every Sunday and he hated it. He did not feel strong enough to refuse to go until he was 12, and then he had to attend church with her. The father showed no interest at all.

Although the mother's social life moved around her church, she had some friends who were Christian Scientists. She began to drift to that group. When Harry was 16, the mother began to develop a large tumor in the abdominal

area. She refused medical treatment, and instead called in a Christian Science Practitioner who told her it really wasn't there. From then until the end of her life she ignored the tumor, refused to talk about it, and although she became greatly disfigured never referred to it again. By now she was a strong advocate of the Christian Science Church.

Harry became enraged at the Church which he saw as endangering his mother's life, but made no attempts to get her to a doctor. He carries his rage even now and states that Christian Science should be outlawed.

When he was in his twenties, his father suffered a heart attack, and although he was admitted to a hospital, primary treatment was from a Christian Science Practitioner. During his illness the father stated that he thought the religion was "so much crap," and Harry agreed with him. But to please the mother, the pretense was continued until the father's death.

Harry speaks seldom about his sister. She was a few years older than he, and was a homely girl. His mother kept telling her that boys "are only after one thing" and the sister did not date until she was in her twenties. She then married the first man who asked her, and the marriage was a sorry failure. Harry blames the failure on the sister's husband.

The family pattern, then, was that of a detached father, a domineering mother who forced her son into a feminine pattern. She was both pampering and depriving. The son is aware of no hostility toward his mother at all, and makes no connection of life with "Mom" and the fact that he is a stuttering alcoholic homosexual.

History of Religiosity

Harry looks back on his early years as being years of religious quests. He says he was very open minded and searching, but could never find what he was looking for. He is uncertain about what it was he was searching for.

He remembers his early Sunday School years with open hatred, and explains this hatred by the fact that no one in the Church could satisfactorily answer his questions. Whenever they sought to teach him anything he would ask, "How do you know"? The teachers would then respond with hostility.

Forced by his mother, he first attended the Conservative Luthern Sunday School. Even his summers were "wasted" in that he had to attend Vacation Bible School when the other kids were out playing.

About the age of 10, they moved and he was forced to attend the Evangelical Sunday School. This was more of the same.

As his mother became interested in Christian

Science, he attended services with her, twice a week, and saw it all as a fraud.

In his late teens, Harry began to attend the Roman Catholic Church with a friend. He at first was impressed with the beauty of the Mass, but was soon disillusioned with the legalism and the authoritarian approach of that Church. His basic question, "But how do you know?" was still unanswered. He soon stopped attending.

He made one more attempt at religion in his forties. He became interested in the religion of Vendanta, a mystical cult of Eastern origin. He greatly admired the leaders of the sect, and for a couple of years immersed himself in the group. He willingly performed menial tasks around the meeting place, and enjoyed attending the lectures. His disillusionment came when he visited the monastery and saw the emphasis on simple living and meditation. The meditation especially bored him.

This was his last attempt at trying to find a religion. He now says the time of the religious quest is past. It is a hopeless search, there just are no answers, and he has stopped looking.

Present Religious Posture

God: The inquiry into Harry's belief or disbelief in the existence of God usually brings forth an angry

tired on the evil in the world, the hypocrisy of the Church, and the impossibility of knowing anything for sure.

At times he states there is no God, and at other times an assertion that we can't know. He moves between atheism and agnosticism. He is aware of some "Power", but he knows nothing about it, and neither does anyone else.

His inconsistency is further emphasized by the anger with which he speaks. One isn't sure if he is angry at God for not being a good God, or if he's angry at God for not existing. Emotionally he cannot seem to accept a non-existence of God, although intellectually he would like to. His anger needs an object, but his anger kills off the object.

As to the concept of God which the Church presents, he is clear in regard to his feelings. Now his anger is directed at the Church, and he can deny the existence of God completely. He points to the evil in the world, things like cancer, social injustice, the death of children, the hypocrisy in the Church, as evidence of atheism.

Perhaps the clearest statement can be made in the subject's own words:

I told you before--there isn't any. I mean no one can tell me he looks like a man, or a moving object, or a philosophy. I know that man did not make the sun or moon and the stars. I know that. I know that man can't make a rose or a radish, but I also know

that God made, if he made all of life and everyone says it's so beautiful, then why do we fight things like rats and cockroaches and rattlesnakes. That's also God's creation if there is a God. It's not all beautiful, much of it is very ugly.

Th: And this God, if there is one, is very sadistic and unjust?

S: Oh definitely, why should my father suffer, and some other guy have a heart attack and be gone like that?

Th: And rather than see a sadistic God, you have gone the other way and . . .

S: I didn't say there was a sadistic God, I said there wasn't any.

At another time, when we were discussing President Kennedy's death:

I think this is another further proof of the complete absence of the protective God, complete, complete . . . There is no protective God in this world, and you know there isn't.

Yet at other times his atheism is expressly denied:

S: But on the subject of religion, I'm a cold guy, and yet I'm not an theist. I told you that, I guess I'm just simply an agnostic. I guess that's what you can call me, but I'm not an atheist.

Th: You're not?

S: No. The guy that says there is no God, and is positive about it is just as stupid as the guy that says, "I know there is a God." I know this much, there is a force, there is a power which I do not understand, and I maintain that no human being in the world has ever understood it and he never will.

In discussing this "Power" he at times touches a point of reverence and awe.

Th: How do you conceive of this Power?

S: I don't, I'm just like the cave man who looked up at the sky and said, "I didn't make this sun and these beautiful trees. Who did?" So they thought, "Well, it's something that isn't human," so they got down on their knees and prayed.

There is something mysterious beyond my understanding. I can't make a flower or a carrot or a radish, I know I can't. I don't know why and no human being knows, and I have stuck to that, and I still do. There is no answer.

I'm amazed at a beautiful rose or a tree or a waterfall, just amazed; but I didn't make them, and nobody I know made them, nobody made the sun or the moon, certainly nobody made Life--human life. Everything that moves, including us, is on a seed basis, let's face it, all animal life and all plantlife is on a seed basis. I don't understand it, I don't. And I don't think anybody does. I don't think the finest scientist in the world can say he knows.

Perhaps we can summarize his attitudes toward "God" in this way. When contemplating Nature, he can speculate about a "Power" which is amazing, creative, and at least sometimes beautiful. He takes his agnostic posture.

When considering "God" in relation to people, when he tries to make a personal application, he becomes angry and overtly atheistic.

In an effort to establish what he does believe in, the following question was asked:

Th: What do you believe in?

S: Luck.

He then went on to speak about this. Sometimes you have good luck, sometimes bad. There is no order or meaning and you have no control over it. Both religion and

superstition are attempts to control luck, both fail, and both are absurd. We are all at the mercy of this dumb fate, and simply have to live our lives as the chips fall.

Prayer: If there is some inconsistency and uncertainty in Harry's view of the existence of God, there is little doubt about his opinion of prayer. Prayer produces nothing, changes nothing.

In his childhood he remembers praying for only one thing, and that was that he would be cured of stuttering: "God did nothing, absolutely nothing."

He speaks of another experience with prayer:

When my father was so sick, this minister (Christian Science) used to come over and pray to God that my father would be relieved of his suffering, that he'd be well again, and then when he failed to bring about the results, he brought us all into the living room and prayed, "Thank you God for taking him."

In another interview:

You do not have a protective God in this world. If you sit on a stove, you're going to burn your behind no matter how many prayers you've said before. You go to war, and the mothers on both sides of the armies are praying that their boys are saved, and 9 times out of 10 the ones who got the prayers got the bullets through the head.

Speaking of his mother's attempts to be healed through faith:

There is no possibility of mental healing--a prayer will be of no value at all.

Yet, in the questionnaire, in response to the question about how often he has prayed in the last two

years, he responded "sometimes". Upon inquiry, he admitted that every now and then a prayer slips out. At times he feels--why not, it can't hurt anything--and just in case there is something to it, why not try it? Then he recovers, feels foolish, and forgets about it.

It should be noted that his concept of prayer is limited, and his expectations are specific and magical. Prayer to him is an instrument to coerce a miraculous event, and when this fails, his conclusion is that prayer avails nothing. He either has not the ability or the willingness to change his fundamentalistic concept of what prayer is, or to measure its results by another standard.

Harry stated earlier that meditation was boring, and this goes along with our impression that he has great difficulty in dealing with symbols, abstractions, or gaining insight. We shall return to this point later.

Death and After Life: Of death he has no fear. There is no after life. Death is a perfectly natural process, a part of the cycle of Nature, that happens to everyone. His ideas on this topic are consistent and logical. Yet two factors stand out:

- 1) His strong resentment when death comes too soon--as to a child, and
- 2) The fact that he "did not have the guts" to commit

suicide when he was in crisis. His reason for not killing himself appears to have been a negative one-- he lacked the "courage" to face death.

Perhaps again, his own words can best describe his thoughts on death:

Death is a perfectly normal thing that occurs to all people and all things. I don't think it has any particular meaning, I don't think God has anything to do with it, or anything else.

On the question of the afterlife, Harry assumed I held the traditional view that he was taught, and so entered a polemic with me:

I still say how do you know? I'm asking you as an individual how do you know? You believe, you have faith. Based on what? I don't know. I wish I had it. Nobody ever came back and told me a single thing. My father does not communicate with me, my mother hasn't, and I know darned well they won't, and I know they will return eventually to the earth, such as this desk will and this ash tray and that telephone will and you will and I will. The cycle is perfect, just like day and night, spring, summer, fall and winter. It never changes. And there's nothing that will change it, no matter how you think or how you act you won't change that . . .

You just live and die and return to the earth, and someone else will be born. When they say life is eternal, of course I understand that, but not my life, not your life, life itself is probably eternal . . .

You're born, you grow up and you die, and you rot and get real smelly, and you turn into dirt and you fertilize the closest tree there is, and that's what makes a beautiful nature. It's just a perfect cycle, Nature in itself, expecting for the cruel part, is beautiful.

The Church: Here Harry's anger and resentment comes out most strongly. He charges the Church with being irrational, hypocritical, foolish, rigid, legalistic, selfish and stupid. He has a special hatred for Christian Science, but the difference is only one of degree. The Church is dogmatic, and pretends to have knowledge that no man can have, and offers no evidence for what it states. About his Sunday School years he states:

It was a tiny Church when I went to Sunday School and I despised it, I hated it.

Why?

They never had any answers for me. First of all I had to go to Sunday School, it was not a matter of wanting to go, you had to go. Then I had to go to Bible School during the summer vacations when other kids were playing, I had to go to this thing.

Another statement sums up his present attitude:

(The Church) needs you, it needs your money, but just be flat broke and hungry, and go and see them, see if you can get a ham sandwich out of them--any church. No, I don't go for it, I'm sorry but I can't. That's why I insist that when I do go out of this world, I want to be cremated, I don't want any service, any flowers, or any mourning or anything. . . .

Another revealing quotation shows again his anger, but in addition demonstrates his perception of the Church:

When I had the apartment on Normandy there was this great big Wilshire Christian Church across the way . . . so come Christmas Eve and I was a little lonely and I thought--well, I might as well go over, what's the difference, they have some service at 11 o'clock. And I went over, and it was a big, big church, and it's tremendous, and the choir, these men wearing these long red robes--came marching down from the

back and that sort of thing. Such pageantry, so barbaric to me, just reminded me of the gang over in Africa in the jungles putting on their war paint. Really it did, that's the first thought I had. And they were yelling their heads off, each one of these guys was trying to sing louder than the other. And this stuff of yelling "come to Jesus, come to Jesus." I don't know, how do you come to somebody that's been dead 2,000 years. I mean, Nobody has ever been able to tell me how to do that trick. So I stayed a few minutes, and then went home and drank a pint of booze all by myself.

He had had other disappointments with the Church:

A few years ago I was all upset, like I was when I came to you, and I went to a local priest. It was automatic, I mean, he was a wonderful guy, but everything was automatic--when did you go to confession last, and so forth. All cut and dried, the same answers he gave to Joe Smith an hour before me.

During the course of our interviews he gave his views on almost all of the sacraments of the Church. His view of Baptism will serve as an example:

Just foolishness. Baptism--taking some water out of the faucet--the same water that otherwise you might drink or wash with, or flush the toilet with, and put it on a baby's head and he's saved.

On the subject of the Bible:

Now the Bible comes along, and it's a pretty book, but it says God made the world in seven days. We know this to be absolutely untrue. We know it's here for millions of years. We know all about the dinosaur stage, we know all about when the reptiles crawled out of the water and 100,000 years later became some sort of moving animal, we all know that. We know we came from the monkey family, we know we're still in evolution. We know that some day we might have three eyes, but we won't be around to see it . . . I don't believe in Adam and Eve, lord they had a couple of sons and they went out to the land of Nod east of Eden and found themselves a couple of wives. Where did they come from? No, no, I mean it. I

can't take the parting of the Red Sea, I don't believe that Christ healed the blind, there are too many good blind people in the world today who deserved to be healed. No, I don't believe in these things, I simply don't.

Throughout this discussion, we see that the subject sees the Church and its customs and practices in the most literalistic terms. This in part reflects his fundamentalistic indoctrination in his early years. But this is not a full explanation. We begin to wonder about his ability to handle symbolic words and actions, and his ability to abstract. His thinking appears very concrete. He appears to be unable to see in parable, myth, or allegory anything except the literal story, which he then calls absurd. We shall return to this point in a later section.

The Meaning and Purpose of Life: Having rejected Religion in the traditional sense of that word, the next step was to try to determine the nature of any religiosity our subject might hold. We did this by opening the area of how he conceived the meaning or purpose of his life. We attempted to determine the area of his "ultimate concern," the basic life principles to which he was committed which gave his life a focus and an organization. How does he handle the questions concerning life goals? What would he like to accomplish with the years he has left? What are his hopes, his dreams, his aspirations?

The subject had more difficulty in this area than any other. He was not used to seeing his life in terms of a "purpose" or as having a "meaning." These concepts were strangely alien to him. When pressed, he usually stated that early in his life he would have liked fame and fortune, now he would be happy to settle for peace and contentment. There is nothing and no one worth dying for.

In the discussion of the religious search, his observations lay in this direction:

Th: Earlier you described yourself as having been a "seeker and a searcher," how do you describe this search?

S: I think every human, if he's honest with himself, is a seeker.

Th: Seeker for what?

S: Oh, Peace of Mind, I suppose. I went through that, well for years I thought everyone would have a religion, but I was always puzzled and am still puzzled by the fact there are so many of them . . .

Th: If you were a searcher, what would you be searching for?

S: Peace and contentment, but I'd rather have a million dollars in the bank.

Th: What is this religious quest?

S: Well, I think we're all involved in it, for me I was involved in it earlier, I am no longer involved at all. I no longer go to Vendanta, and I don't go to Mass, uh, frankly, I don't like it.

Th: Why not?

S: It was always a search, never with results. Like Yoga, I got nothing out of it, just nothing.

We also discussed directly what his meaning or

purpose in life now was. There was some indication from the questionnaire that he had one.

Th: You answered this one question as though you had some sense of meaning or purpose in your life.

S: I don't know if I'm going to be here tomorrow, I might drop dead in five minutes. I have a sense of meaning as long as I'm here, but a long range plan . . .

Th: What is the meaning for now?

S: Just as I got through saying, do the best you can each day. It's easier dying when you've got a clear conscience. We've missed so much in life by not finding out that life is so much more pleasant if you're kind and good and pretty decent.

Th: More meaningful, or just more pleasant?

S: I guess just more pleasant. Meaningful is a word that is very difficult for me to define. I don't get up every morning and say, "Gee, I wonder how much good I can do today, boy am I going to be a good guy." No, it isn't like I have to drive at it, it's pretty automatic as far as I'm concerned.

Another time we addressed our attention to his suicidal crisis:

Th: You were very close to killing yourself a few months ago, how come you didn't, what was there about Life that you didn't want to leave it?

S: I don't know.

Th: There must be something about Life that is precious to you.

S: I don't know--if I knew I would tell you.

Other efforts at getting him to define a life purpose brought these responses:

I made such a mess of things for so many years, that

I would like now to prove to myself and to other people that I am worth knowing.

I would loved to have been a famous movie star--the lights, the fame, the dough, and the worship of the people . . .

Peace and contentment, but I'd rather have a million bucks in the bank.

He has high respect for certain heroes--including Ghandi and Kennedy. They were men who really were trying to bring love and peace in the world, they were men who really tried, and he admires that. As for a Universal Purpose or Goal to Life:

I don't think there is a purpose in the whole thing. It's just automatic.

Perhaps one final quotation might sum up the difficulty our subject had in handling these questions:

Again I tell you, this is a little hard for me. Everyone has some sort of purpose, whether it's just as simple as getting up and going to work in the morning, that is the purpose for that day. Or if a man wants to be the greatest lawyer or the greatest author in the world and if he really plugs away at it, he has a certain prupose; and if a guy wants to see how much booze he can drink that is also a certain purpose, it's a wrong one, but it's a purpose. I think everything is a purpose. You sit down for meal not only because you enjoy it but because it nourishes your body and keeps you alive, but it's a purpose. You could skip dinner some night.

As far as getting a great big bunch of beautiful ideals all wrapped up in cellophane with a nice ribbon on it, I don't have those. I'm a confused guy in some ways.

Insofar as we were able to determine, the whole concept of a life meaning or purpose is now alien to him.

Evidently, at one time of his life these things were important, and he searched for a religious identity. But being unable to find one, he has now given up the search, and wants nothing more out of life than to find peace and contentment, and to get along with other people.

We asked him what his plans are for ten years from now and he had none. Pressing further, and asking what he would hope he would be doing, he responded that he would be retired, living a comfortable life without stress.

Having the respect of other people--all other people is of the utmost importance to him. He also believes in being nice to people, because if he isn't they become angry at him and he can't tolerate this.

He stated on the questionnaire that it was extremely important for him to live up to his own standard of values. This involved being "good," defined as "kind, gentle, generous, helpful, nice to people who are close." He does not like "Bad" people, those who "hurt other people, murder, stealing, growling, depriving."

Commitment: We were unable to find any area in which our subject was committed to something outside of himself. He was not committed to a theism, neither was he committed to atheism. Although he characterized some social causes as being "good" he was not committed to them. He was committed to no person, and to no group of people.

We wondered for a time if he was committed to his standard of values, but upon inquiry it seems that he holds them simply because it is painful to depart from them too far. To be committed to them would be painful for him, because then he would have to judge himself in terms of these values, and the judgment would hurt.

For Harry, commitment is something to be avoided. His primary concern is for his own peace of mind. Life has no purpose and no ultimate meaning, and so there is nothing to become committed to.

III. BETTY

Present Description

Betty is a 22 year old, attractive, Caucasian, single girl who lives with another girl. She is self-supporting, and has recently been fired from her job as assistant editor of a trade magazine. She is now actively involved in looking for another position in the same field. She is extremely bright, and tends to intellectualize. Betty attended a highly regarded small college for two and a half years and did well academically, but was forced to leave college under conditions to be described later.

Upon first meeting Betty, one is impressed with her intellect, her sense of determination, and the masculine nature of her speech and some of her mannerisms.

She is subject to depressions, feelings of loneliness, and helplessness. Alcohol is a problem to her, although she cannot yet be called an alcoholic. She is also aware of strong homosexual feelings which she struggles against. She has had two or three homosexual experiences which were not satisfying to her, yet she says that she has never had a satisfactory sexual experience with any male.

Her "Cry for Help" was heard by a friend who

brought her to the SPC. At the time of her first interview the therapist noted that she was extremely depressed, unable to talk or look at him. She felt hopeless and was unable to see any solution to her problems. Her self image was very bad, she felt she was "no good," was "unworthy" and had no future. In spite of the depression, the therapist observed that she was intelligent, and considered her a good prospect for psychotherapy. He rated her a 5 on the lethality scale.

Presenting Problems

In the first interview, Betty designated three problem areas with which she is now struggling: the drinking problem, the homosexual problem, and her suicidal tendencies.

Alcohol: When she starts to drink, she has difficulty in maintaining control:

I cannot drink, I love it, but I can't drink. That's because I won't quit, I just drink until I get myself bombed.

I had done a lot of drinking when I was in London (at age 15), but I had actually done too much drinking then . . . I will drink, and I'll drink a lot, and at the party it was there and I just put it away.

I have to watch myself very carefully, in fact I won't drink at all now, because I just won't quit, I drink too much. I'm not an obnoxious drunk, I'm a lot of fun, but I'm not fun for myself.

Yet a careful examination of her history indicates

that although there are one or two instances of where her drinking had bad consequences, she is not addicted to alcohol.

Homosexuality: She feels very guilty about her homosexuality and struggles to keep it under control:

I only got involved with two girls and in both instances I had to get out. It wasn't what I wanted, and yet I can see that it would be so easy to get involved in this kind of relationship.

And I don't think--maybe I'm wrong--that I'm organically set up this way. I think I have become involved in these things through other problems I've had, there are reasons for it.

I don't want to be this way, and I have fought it, and yet never have I had what I consider a successful or an emotionally close relationship with any man I have ever gone out with. But then, I've gone out with fellows that have problems too. They were having trouble. The last three fellows that I dated have been Jewish boys with deep seated emotional problems, and wanted a mother, and so I sort of can't decide what it is.

It's bothered me a great deal . . . I'd like to live just a nice normal life.

Suicidal problem. The precipitating cause for the suicidal crisis was the abrupt nature of her being fired from her job:

I was assistant editor for a business magazine, and I walked into my office last Monday and I was told they were going to replace me with a man. It was kind of a blow. I was completely unprepared. I had worked very hard for the job. I didn't know a thing when I started, so--I was kind of shocked, and I had been feeling bad anyway, so I thought I just had to get away . . .

She recognizes, however, that the roots of the

crisis go far deeper than just the abrupt loss of her job:

I had been unhappy for a long time, and I still haven't decided what brought it on, it's just--well--I think I know what brought it on . . .

I became very, very friendly with a woman who works on another magazine, Barbara. She's 42. She's very much older than I am, but she's single and she lives at home with her family. We became very good friends, just good friends (i.e., with no homosexual activities). I respected her, I wanted her to be my friend. And, I don't know, I guess I was feeling I was going to get involved (sexually) with her and I didn't want to. I don't know. But when I was really loaded one night she came over to my apartment, and I told her about my past and then the next day I got this terrible thing. It was sort of funny, you know, you just decide, I have nothing. I have no family and I probably now have no friend. I was feeling unhappy about my job at the time because I wasn't making any money, and I just couldn't pay my debts. And I hadn't had a decent relationship with any of the fellows I had been dating with--they were sicker than I was. I hadn't met any new people. It was very dismal, the whole thing, I couldn't see anything in the future for me, and the past was kind of sick, I didn't care for the way that was either, and I just wanted to quit--finish. I didn't want to think about it anymore, and I think it came to a head when I said all this to Barbara.

Now I think I possibly said it to warn her, in some way, I don't know. But I had been having problems before that. Drinking--a couple of--I'd have a couple of beers and just pass out, like that, for all night long, and there's no reason to it, I can drink a lot.

On one occasion I happened to be at Barbara's home, and she said that I really wasn't out, that I had talked to her and done a lot of crying . . . but I'd been aware for years that I hadn't been coping with a lot of things. But I'd always felt--I got this from my father--that, there's nothing wrong with you, just sit up straight and cool it.

But when I realized I wanted to die, I knew there was more to it than I could take care of myself . . . I got scared of myself . . . I wanted to jump off something. I always have, I've always wanted to jump from

a high place. But I frightened myself and wanted to tell somebody, and I did, and they brought me over here.

Asked, if in retrospect, she really felt she was close to killing herself, she replied:

I know I will, I scare myself, I know myself that well . . . I was really calm about the whole thing. I was going to do it, and that was that, and all I could think of was telling someone I was going to do it so they could take care of my dog.

The suicidal crisis, then, was the result of an accumulation of many different factors including the drinking problem, the homosexual problem, and the fact that:

In the last couple of years my self-confidence and self-esteem has just dropped tremendously.

There is no history of previous suicidal attempts or threats, however:

I'd thought of it lots of times, but never seriously. You know, it would pass through my mind, that this whole thing would be a lot better if I could go out and slash my wrists or something . . . I put my hand through a window when I was a little younger, because of some other problems, and things like that. I've always felt sort of like I wanted to hurt myself, you know, very aggressive toward myself, upset, wanting to end it all--but never seriously.

Background

Betty is the oldest child in her family which includes her mother and father and two younger brothers. Her father is a career man in the Marine Corp presently holding the rank of full colonel. He is presently

stationed in Manila, and Betty's mother and brothers are with him. Her childhood was one of travel and change:

My Dad went overseas just a few months after I was born--he came back three years later. We lived in Salt Lake City (where she was born) until I was about 5, went to Florida for a couple of months, came back to Ogden, Utah until I was about 7, then we lived in Virginia for awhile, then we came back to Salt Lake for a few months, then my father went to Korea, but we didn't go, we stayed in Salt Lake; and then we've been to Alabama twice, California twice, and London . . . the longest time I ever spent in one school was two years.

She doubts if all this moving around had much of an effect on her. Her school grades were usually good, and she found she could find new friends fairly easily:

I got involved in small groups of friends, but they were never the big social type at all . . . I think I learned to make new friends fast.

Her description of her family life reminds one of a well run military installation:

We're not that type of family that runs around and kisses each other, you know, not even kissing anymore good night. There's ah, a sort of--comradeship--but it's not . . . ah, I couldn't say it's a warm fire-side sort of family, no.

As far back as she can remember, Betty has had to carry a large share of responsibility for the family. This is especially true in raising her brothers where she sees herself as having to carry:

. . . most of the responsibility. In fact, I practically raised Joe in the time that I spent there. I've been their baby sitter ever since I can remember . . . Albert would rather talk to me than anyone else about what he is doing. They would go away for a week and

they thought nothing about leaving me.

When my mother had Joe, she had to stay in the hospital for two weeks. My father moved out . . . and took a room out there (near the hospital) and I had my brother Al for two weeks, and I was ten, that makes Al four. I took care of him for two weeks. We did the washing, cooked the dinner, cleaned the house --got along fine.

When she brought Joe home, he was premature and he was so tiny my mother was kind of afraid of him, so I took care of him all the time . . .

Perhaps the most descriptive comment Betty makes on the distant nature of her early family life is the one she made wistfully during the course of conversation:

I've always wanted to be part of a family.

Mother: When asked to tell me, "What kind of person your mother is," Betty responded:

Hmmmm--attractive woman, loves her husband, likes to be busy all the time, in fact she's miserable if she's not constantly busy, social--she likes a good bridge game, a good cocktail party, yet she's always been a housewife. She's very fanatical about a clean house, always done her own ironing because nobody else can do it the way it should be done. Before they left here they set up a fabric store, and she became very involved in that . . . in fact she'd like to be with that all the time. She's an attractive, up to date woman.

Then we inquired into her relationship to her mother:

(Prior to age 15) I couldn't get along with my mother. We used to fight like cats and dogs, but this type of fighting was very common in the household. "You didn't wash the coffee pot again." "Well, I didn't want to wash it."

But it was a good kind of fighting, because I'd forget. We'd finish having a horrible argument and mother's violent temper--she'd hit, and she used to

really wallop me good--and when it was over I'd forget about it, and I have never held any resentment towards my mother at all.

I understand her, as I got older, that she was very high strung, and I learned how to avoid getting her upset because she was dangerous when she was upset, and she used to scare me when I was younger.

But I understood mother, she's kind of like a kid. To handle her is no problem . . . She's tempered tremendously as she's gotten older. She had an uncontrollable temper, she'd get all red in the face and completely lose control, and the safest thing is to run and lock yourself in the bathroom.

But she seems to have tempered . . . Mother's very moody, she's up and down type of person; but she's so busy, she's always been so busy. It's only now (in Manila) that she's ever really been depressed. She's always kept herself so busy the only thing I can remember her doing is getting violently angry.

The Mormon Church disowned her when she married my father, and my father and her family never did get along. She's closer now to his parent than to her own.

One memory Betty reports is her mother always saying:

Oh, Betty's never going to get married. They always felt like I was never going to get married. There's no reason why, they just always sort of said that. They all think I'm too--they don't know me. They just know what I let them know, and I project this very aggressive type--I'll go out and make money.

Father: If Betty can write off her mother as an angry child whom she has learned to "handle," she cannot treat her relationship with her father so casually. Describing him, she says:

He's a military man. He's a man of firm principles, he's good natured, good humored. He works hard--the harder the job the better he likes it. He doesn't hold much with--he's not a liberal. He just finished

teaching four years at Ivy College (ROTC) and he was miserable. He was very unhappy there. He had a terrible time understanding the students and the faculty a great deal of the time. There is a right and there is a wrong--that's the type of fellow he is. I think most of the time he doesn't even see (degrees of right and wrong). He's usually right. He has the kind of principles that are usually pretty damn true to form. If you follow them you stay out of trouble.

Betty can never recall her father showing a sort of warm emotion. He was high principled, effective as an officer, and apparently unaware of the feelings of his little daughter:

We've never known each other, we've never gotten along since I was about 15 we've never gotten along and previous to that we had been "friends". I just adored my father, he was my idol . . .

But he was an unresponsive idol. Cold, aloof and stoic, he couldn't seem to be able to respond to the request for warmth from his daughter:

My father would upset me terribly on many occasions (by his coldness). But when I got accustomed to it, I built a wall for myself, so that when he tossed me out, although I was hysterically crying about it, when I got over that, I just realized, well, I had to (go on).

I used to, as a kid, I used to think, well, this time it will be different, this time he'll have a different reaction to me. I finally completely gave up on it.

Today she has no "feelings" about him, only "thoughts":

Oh, I don't know, I've been thinking too much about him to have any feelings. I've been thinking about him in terms of the past, but no, I'm not fond of him, I think he's a mean man, but I respect him. I respect his ability to get where he has gotten, he's worked hard, he's got his college degree, he's making good money, always does a good job. He has yet to be given

an assignment that he didn't give it his damndest, and always come out on top, always first in his class, respected by everyone who ever met him. And yet I respect too, his ability to laugh at a good joke.

I don't know him, you see. I really don't know him. I know him only as a man. He's just not what I would consider a nice person. He doesn't have a lot of friends.

She would like to be able to write him a letter, telling him of "the mess I'm in," but she can't:

Everyone who knows my father says, "Boy, don't say a word to him, he'll just completely disown you entirely.

Perhaps the most revealing incident concerning the relationship between father and daughter surrounds the manner in which Betty left college.

She was in her junior year in the same college in which her father was teaching ROTC. She had entered the pre-med program and had later transferred to Literature. Her grades were above a "B" average and in addition, she was earning her own money for books and other expenses. "My father never had to put out a cent for me to go to school."

One evening during the school year, her boyfriend was out of town and allowed her to use his car to go alone to a party. She began drinking, and by the time she left the party, she was drunk. She sideswiped two parked cars, and was arrested by the police.

. . . I was charged with two counts of hit and run
. . . I spent the night in jail and two friends from
school bailed me out at 5 o'clock in the morning, and

I thought that was it. They bailed me out, and I didn't get a ticket or anything, I thought it was over with.

Two weeks later a girl ran up to me: "There's a policeman on the campus with a warrant for your arrest." So then I knew that I had to say something to my father.

We had to get a lawyer, very unpleasant situation, and all the money that I had left to go on for the rest of the year went to pay the fine for drunk driving, and to my lawyer to get me off the hit and run charges. Needless to say, my father was not just a little bit chagrined, because he was on the campus and the school got involved, and he was very embarrassed by the entire situation and upset with me for being so foolish.

This happened on Halloween, but we didn't get through with all the trial stuff till the end of the first quarter . . . Of course my grades suffered terribly during that time. In fact I had been a "B" student, and I "D-ed" two courses and failed another that quarter.

My father picked up my grade cards, came home, threw them at me and said, "That's the end of your college career." He gave me fifty dollars and told me to go to Los Angeles and find a job, and I did. I was in my apartment and had a job within a week. I had to, I had no choice. I've been working ever since.

The abrupt "dishonorable discharge" from her family was a major crisis for Betty, yet she had no suicidal thoughts at that time. Trained to be a "good soldier," to "sit up straight and cool it," she was equal to the demands--at least for the time. It was her next abrupt discharge--the sudden loss of her job two years later--that brought the strong suicidal thoughts.

History of Religiosity

Of her father, Betty says:

My father (is) not (religious) at all as far as any organized religion, he just sort of, any comment I ever heard him say was that he believes in God in his own way. Oh, I think my mother was able to drag him to church once or twice . . .

Of course, my father's background is not religious at all. My grandmother is a Christian Scientist, but not a church-going Christian Scientist.

Her mother's background is quite different:

My mother is very religious in a kind of inward, emotional way. She hasn't attended church very often since she was married, but she had a very, very religious childhood--a good Mormon. When I was six or seven, she used to attend church all the time. But she has grown further and further away from any organized church activities. I don't remember the last time she went to church.

But she is religious, she feels a strong thing about the Church. But then that's her background and it's very understandable that she would. She very seldom pressures anyone.

Of her own religious background, she observes:

I was a very religious person as a child, always went to church and became involved in all sorts of church activities.

We moved around so much that it really didn't matter what kind of church it was, I just sort of always fell into the neighborhood church.

The first church I can remember going to was the Mormon Church when we lived in Salt Lake City, and, uh, Oh I went to the Mormon Church and I went to the Baptist Church, and to the Construction and the Presbyterian Church, and of course at all the Military Bases we lived at, it's just been the Protestant Chapel. So it hasn't been any particular religious affiliation.

I spent about a year and a half constantly with a

Catholic Father, who happened to be a chaplain on the base when I was about six or seven, and uh, we were very close. He used to take me on rock hunting trips, and I spent weekends on trips with this man (in a group), and uh, I was very fond of him. But my parents got concerned that he was trying to convert me, and they sort of broke up the friendship.

And just, whatever church happened to be--the Church of England, when I was in England I became involved in the Church of England. Actually, since I came back to the States (about age 16) I haven't been involved at all.

She went through a very intense religious phase when she was 12 and 13 years old, but she remembers very little about the nature of the experience:

I went through a very religious phase when I was 12 and 13. My friends were very religious, my girlfriends that I ran around with.

We belonged to a special church group and this sort of thing. I read the Bible all the time, I read the Bible all the way through.

I can't even remember what kind of experience it was. Not, to me, it was interesting, and I remember a lot about the Bible for instance, and about the Church, but uh, as an experience, I don't remember.

I know I was very, very happy at the time. I was very happy and very successful at everything I did, and just had a real good life for those two years . . . I was involved in something that was meaningful to me, and so I was able to do well in almost every endeavor.

But perhaps the most determinative religious experience of her youth took place outside the context of any formal church. This took place while her father was stationed in London, England. Betty was placed in a boarding school several miles from where her family was

living:

This was an American high school in London, all military kids. All nuts, wild, say anything, do anything. I think about the kids I ran around with, no wonder they had so many problems. They all had problems, at least the small group I knew.

They weren't the social group, they were the "A" students--the "A" students that made their "A's" by sitting in the bar. You know, the good kids--the cheer leader type--were all struggling for grades, and this group that I was with, we didn't have to struggle for grades, most of them were very bright, all going to college, high school was a laugh for them, and uh, we'd go to plays and sit around bars and yak about the things we were doing.

Ann Rand was the big idol for all of us--this type of thing. Angry, they moved around, they knew what the score was, or thought they did. Life held very few surprises for any of us, uh, we didn't think so anyhow.

I asked her to elaborate on the Ann Rand cult:

. . . the ideal of selfishness--each man for himself, which is great--but doesn't work. But we all thought it did, and we thought we all were each very much individual, and very selfish and self concerned, and yet we spent 99% of our time together . . . but it was an exciting thing to think about.

Money, going places, no one's going to stop us, no one's going to break us, we've got it on all of them, this was our process of thinking . . . I had typed on a little card a quote of Ann Rand's out of one of her books, Atlas Shrugged:

"I swear to my life and my love of it that I will never live for another man or ask another man to live for me."

The experience was intoxicating while it lasted, but her father was then transferred back to this country, and the sojourn in a distant land was finished:

The adjustments, the terrible adjustments for all of

us--and I've kept in contact with most of them in coming back to the states.

I was the youngest, the rest of them graduated there, but I had to come back and go into a Stateside high school. It was a terrific adjustment, in fact, I only made three or four friends, and in a minority group.

. . . It was very dull, and our interests weren't the same. This one girl that I met, we became the closest friends. She introduced me to jazz, and this is the thing. We became good, good friends and she had never been involved in the high school activities.

. . . I was so much older than the rest of them so I didn't make a lot of friends my last year in high school.

And the rest of them (from London) who came back went to work or went on to college and had a terrible time adjusting to college life or living at home. Only one completed college, she did fantastically well, graduated with Phi Beta Kappa, but that's only one out of ten. The rest dropped out along the way, got married, got pregnant--had a terrible time.

This is the history of a religious quest. A story of expectation and disappointment. We turn now to the present situation.

Present Religious Posture

Religion: Betty gives her present thinking on her London experience:

. . . I'm not disillusioned. I'm just able to look at it a little more rationally. I still think it (the philosophy of Ann Rand) would be grand. I couldn't live that way, I don't think anyone can live without other people.

People are human, they're not machines; they will cry, they will need people, you can't escape it, I think everyone does. When you take that element out the

whole thing falls apart. You can't even make money, you know, if you can't do that--and that's what she's saying--that these selfish, inhuman machine-type people were the ones that were really right, they had it over everyone else, that knew the score, uh, I don't think they did, but I wouldn't say the philosophy was bad.

I still think that if you could be this way--Wow--you could go; but you can't. It's a delightful thing to talk about and think about, but the moment you try you become isolated and become stagnated. I know people who are trying it and who are stagnated and are so involved in themselves that they're running about in circles. And the things they were talking about and feeling five years ago, they're still talking about and still feeling. They haven't progressed at all . . . They're getting nowhere with what they believe. I was forced out, otherwise I probably would be in the same situation.

If Ann Rand-ism is a good idea that doesn't work, religion for Betty is a good idea that she would like to work for her.

I think that if a person feels a need for religion, and it serves the need, great, I'm all for it. For some it doesn't serve the need so they don't need it. (this need is) the need for something to hold onto, the basis from which to operate. I always imagine it as the center of a circle, you know, and you're able to put one hand on that center, and work out. I think we all need it in one way or another. Some people find it in religion, some people find it in an individual. I don't think many people find it is themselves . . .

I don't (handle this need myself) very well. I can't use myself (as the center). I'm not sure enough of who I am or what I am, to use myself as this basis from which to operate, and I'm not sure I ever could.

Betty is at the point now, where she feels a need for something (or someone) outside herself to affirm herself. She believes that some people have found this

through religious beliefs. She struggles to express what she means more exactly:

. . . just something that you always, that you feel, uh a Purpose I guess is the whole idea, some Purpose so you do have a direction.

. . . I always thought it was myself, but I discovered that it wasn't, that I was falling to pieces because I couldn't use myself.

- . . . I couldn't tell you, if you were to ask me, I have no idea (what my purpose is). I feel very much at odds with living, I'm sort of bouncing from pillar to post . . .

But Betty must carefully guard her intellectual integrity as she thinks about religion. "Faith" is a dangerous word:

I don't see how anyone could make that statement honestly (that they believe on faith). They must have some rationale for it, they would have to have. Even to say, "I believe this because I need to believe it," would be better than just saying that I believe it on faith.

But even with the intellectual problems she finds in religion, Betty is drawn to it:

I'd like to become a Catholic, I always have, but there are too many things I can't accept in the Church . . . I'm sort of over-whelmed by the masses of people that have become involved in this, and the kind of comfort it gives. I've known so many people that without their faith would have, you know, fallen apart (people), who have died very peacefully with their rosary, very content, I'm really fascinated by it.

But she is far from ready for any "leap of faith":

My thinking now is that if I can get myself organized, I'll be better able to know where to look. I don't think that I can think about it constructively when

I'm so--still not integrated with myself. I don't know what I am, I don't feel a personal identity.

God: Betty holds a clear-cut opinion of God: he is a sometimes useful myth invented by man:

I don't believe in a God sitting up there, you know, looking down. I think God is created by each individual and, uh, takes his own form according to his needs. If I need a God who would guide me, that's the kind of God I would create. I think you would (get the guidance) at least you'd get this strength that you need, and again, all you are doing is reaffirming a personal strength in you anyway, but you're just reaffirming it by feeling that you are reacting to something outside yourself. But you're creating a fiction, but the fiction is useful. And I think this is how the whole thing got started, out of man's need to create something, and he did, he's a pretty smart fellow because he created it, and he used it and he built on it.

He takes his own principles that he feels he should live by, even though often times he can't, and sets these up as the dictum of the fiction he's created. Because I think everyone's aware of the way things ought to be, just by experiencing them.

The problem is, of course, can Betty avail herself of the benefits of a mythological God? Can this fiction become real enough to her to fill her need? Perhaps it can:

In nature, for example, I feel the presence of Something, and if you want to call it God--fine . . . a feeling of something bigger and more complex than I. Something--again, you have to have a word for it--Nature, even.

But this "Something" is nothing that can respond to prayer:

Prayer has a purpose if it works, but for me it doesn't work right now.

She did actively engage in prayer in her youth:

Not a great deal of formalized prayer . . . mostly a great deal of very personal prayer. In fact they encouraged this type of prayer, this organization I belonged to (at the age of 12). I think this is typical of evangelical churches.

. . . I really can't remember (what I prayed for). Probably for getting along with my family, and being successful in what I was doing . . . Not asking God to do something, but to guide me in doing something, you know. Help me, give me some sort of direction.

I don't think I even got this in any of my, uh, training through the church, believing in a great hand coming down and moving mountains and all, but it (prayer) can be a source of strength.

Death: She speaks about death in a very matter of fact manner:

Dying is not to me, I don't get all emotional about dying, it's just the end. If I was involved (in some Cause), if I believed in something and my belief was going to lead me into treacherous situations where possibly I would have to die for the Cause, I wouldn't toss away the belief just because I might have to die for it.

Th: You're not at all afraid to die?

S: No.

Th: What is death?

S: Death is the end of all the physical goings-on in your body, your heart stops and you die. I don't see anything more in it than that. The End. I would never believe in an afterlife. When you die, you leave a lot of people behind, they're very unhappy for awhile, they soon get over it--what more can you say? I just don't believe you can say anymore about dying, or think anymore about dying. The only thing that bothers me about dying is leaving the few friends I have . . .

I don't feel I have (a future), and I don't feel badly about leaving it. I don't feel I have a future right now, I see nothing ahead, nothing definite.

But later she began to wonder about her attitude toward death:

I think I've intellectualized the fact of dying. I think I have put it on a different plane, which is probably very wrong, and I will discover that it is . . . I do this with many things. I intellectualize, but really I get upset about (problems her friends bring her). I'd like to hit her and make her cry is what I'd really like to do, but--I'm really very concerned about it, but if I talk about it--and I feel this is maybe what I've done about dying. But then I really haven't thought a great deal about how I felt about dying.

To Betty, suicide presents no moral issue:

I don't have any moral feelings involved, I think it's a sort of free will thing. I don't get all upset because someone says it's a sin, that's a lot of humbug as far as I'm concerned.

Morality: To Betty, homosexuality, like suicide, is not a moral question. But morality is very important to her:

. . . but your own created values--"created", I shouldn't say that--the selection you've chosen, and then stick by them as much as you can.

But a personal selection of values has one limitation:

Individual preference is good only insofar as it doesn't interfere with another person's individual preference . . . We have a certain amount of responsibility to other people because we live in the world, and I think we have to feel a sense of responsibility for the world.

Why?

Because we're part of it. You can't be a part of something unless you feel a sense of responsibility for it. And I don't mean a tremendous big thing like I'm responsible for the world, but a sense of concern about how your actions and your way of life is going to affect others.

I inquired about the freedom of a person to select, or to change his value structure:

I don't think you have a great deal. You may think you do, but once you've established a system of values for yourself, I think you find it very hard to change them.

. . . To tell you the truth, I'm questioning lately whether I really have a set of values, a concrete set of values. But the ones that I do know that I have are very hard to change. It would be a waste of time to even argue with me about some things.

The meaning and purpose of life: Right now, Betty feels as though life is a struggle, and perhaps a fight that she's losing. She's confused and uncertain about how much she is to blame for the condition of her life:

I feel, I don't know if I feel rightfully, but I feel I deserve a lot more (out of life) than I've gotten, but I'm very optimistic about getting it--I try to be very optimistic.

They have to (get better), either they have to or it's just got to stop--one way or the other, because I can't, I cannot continue going and having everything I touch kind of crumble, and have this feeling of failure about everything I do. I just don't see how I can go on. I'm only 22 years old, and I've got a hell of a lot more life to live, and I'm finding it tough now to deal with this constant--it's a battle. I'm finding life a battle, and I don't think life should be that big a battle. But I fight it. Everything I want I have to fight for and there's times when I'm exhausted.

I don't give a damn, I don't want to fight anymore, I want to be given a little. Then I think, all right, on the other hand, how much have you given, and I see that there are places where I haven't given as much as it was possible to give, or I have side stepped a possibility of getting something out of lack of insight in some way or another. And I find myself blaming both myself and, uh, fate and circumstance.

She feels that it would help if she had a strong sense of meaning in her life. The life struggle would be easier. But the sense of meaning in her present life is very vague:

Yes, I believe my life has meaning, somewhere, really and truly, if I'm honest with myself, I think so. I sense that it has (meaning) . . . I don't feel that my life has a meaning right now, but I know that it must --or should. I should have a meaning to my life . . . I think everything must have, it's just a feeling that I have that--you can't survive, I don't think that you can live, uh, unless you feel that your life has some meaning, or you find some meaning in it, because what's the point?

We then asked if she felt the depression and suffering she was now experiencing had any meaning.

No. Well, I don't know, I'm trying to be very optimistic about it. There must be, it must be. In other words everything should work out for the best. It must. You know, a better job. And I feel I'm going to get myself squared away, because everything has sort of blown up in my face, and I think, Gee, you know, in a way I'm kind of glad that it happened now because I could have gone and on and on like I was, being basically very unhappy, not unhappy enough to maybe convince myself I could take care of it. So I feel in some ways, maybe it does (have a meaning). And I don't mean a grandiose sort of meaning, but it definitely has a meaning for me because it's taken me in a certain direction that I wouldn't have taken otherwise.

What direction is that?

I don't know. I think it's a positive direction towards getting myself squared away in some way, or thinking about it more positively rather than having this big empty void sort of thing that I keep seeing.

You know, often times all you can see is this void, and you don't--you're so involved in the void that you don't know the proper questions to ask yourself in

order to see anything else.

I was unhappy before, but I wasn't doing anything about it, and being unhappy and not knowing where to look to find out what was causing it and why.

It's much easier not to look, I'd rather be a clown about the whole thing.

Betty is now beginning to enter the search for some sense of meaning in her life. She believes that it's there, because she has to believe that it's there, and she has some specific ideas on how to find it.

I think we make our own (meaning in life). I mean, I don't think there's a great big meaning up here and that one day you'll see it. I think you make your own meaning, whatever suits you. You can't have a great big neon sign up here saying, "This is the meaning of life," because all people can't accept it.

. . . Well, you sort of have to interpret what you see, and everyone is bound to interpret it differently. A lot of times you interpret wrongly and this can make you miserable. Then you really haven't found the meaning, you have misinterpreted. And I think that comes from not knowing yourself, not knowing what is the best interpretation for you, and so you take whatever one happens to go through your mind. If you find that you can't live with the thing you've taken on, then you're really lost.

The goals of life: Seldom in the past has Betty's life been without a goal. Ever since she can remember, "I've always wanted to be a doctor." During her childhood she consumed doctor books, and this dream sustained her and helped her maintain high grades throughout school. When she entered college, it was as a pre-med major. But her father didn't approve:

He didn't want me to be a pre-med major right from the beginning, he was very upset about that. And although he was right in the end, I had to prove it to myself. He didn't want me to be because he said, "You'll never make it, it's just a dream you've built up that you want to do. You're not mentally equipped to do it," and I didn't have the drive--he felt. Well, he was right, but I had to find out for myself. And I enjoyed it. I wouldn't trade it for anything. All the biology I loved.

With this goal taken from her, she changed to the study of Literature in the hope of becoming a teacher. She believes she has a feeling for children, and she knows that she enjoys them. But with her dismissal from college (again through the action of her father), this dream too was taken from her. One cannot be a teacher without a college degree, and one can't have a college degree without the financial backing to work for one.

Now she is in the publishing field, and hopes to become a writer, and is now working toward that end.

She speaks of her own life goals in more general terms:

I think what I need is a sense of security in some way. And I don't know what way, but I feel the need for a sense of security. A sense of meaning and a sense of security go hand in hand. When you have meaning, you have security. This is the ability to live with yourself, and have a sort of peace of mind within yourself. In the end, it's peace of mind.

Sometimes she thinks she should aim for a more "normal life."

I'd like to live a, just a nice normal life, and yet, I'd get bored. The only person I've known so far that

I thought lived sort of a normal life was my friend, Barbara Hall, and her life is sort of boring, but she's happy, and she has a peace of mind that I would like to have. She goes to work everyday, she's worked for this company for 20 years. She likes her work, the people she works with. She's never married, but she lives with her family, loves her parents, has dinner about the same time every day. And yet she's still interested in life. She reads a great deal, but she has a certain peace of mind, a casual, easy-going feeling about things. I don't think I could ever be that way, but I would like to work toward having a little bit of this peace of mind--it's just a matter of being able to cope with life.

But for the present she feels she has to put aside any thoughts of Life Goals:

I have no goals because I don't know where I'm going. But right now, at this moment, all I'm thinking about is getting myself squared away. I don't think I can think about goals or the future until I get settled, and that's why the job is important. I've got to eat, and I've got to be happy with myself. I think I'm self-defeating, so until I can do something about that, I'm just going to fight myself and not get anywhere.

IV. TOM

Present Description

Tom is a 34 year old, white single male who is neat appearing, well mannered and intelligent. The first impression he presents is one of being wooden, rigid, cold and overly formal in his manner. He is frightened of personal encounter, and seems eager to receive approval.

Tom has been in mental hospitals several times with various diagnoses of character disorder, sociopathic personality, and psycho-neurotic reaction with depressive features. He is both a homosexual and an alcoholic. He has also served time in prison on check writing charges. He presently is on parole.

His life history indicates that he is a capable person able to perform well on jobs he has had in banks, department stores, and now in an insurance company in the position of underwriter.

He failed to graduate from college with but one semester to go because during the course of practice teaching in a rural school, he was discovered to have been having homosexual relationships with some of the boys. His other jobs have been lost through being arrested on charges of forging checks.

Although his night life is characteristically a

wild combination of heavy drinking and homosexual activity, he has been able to confine this side of his life to the night time, being able to function well during the day.

Suicidal History

Tom has made at least six attempts at suicide during his life time, most of them with pills, and some of them serious.

One attempt was a homosexual death pact with his partner and in this instance they turned on the gas in their apartment and went to sleep. The only explanation he can give for the fact that they did not die, was that the apartment was too leaky--they had failed to make it air tight.

He reports having made several suicidal threats during his time at college, but there were no attempts during this period.

Background

Tom's mother and father were married when she was 21 and he was 19. They were divorced almost immediately after he was born, and his mother remarried right away. Tom was formally adopted by his step-father when he was 6. The second marriage produced another son who was two years Tom's junior. Tom's real father was Jewish, his mother and step-father were Protestant.

Both of Tom's fathers were Navy men, and the family moved about frequently.

Father: In answer to an inquiry about what kind of person his step-father was, Tom responded:

Ah, Navy man, typical uh, chief electrician, uh, he wasn't a bad sort really. He treated me practically equally with his--with my own half brother who was his own kid. He never showed any favoritism.

If I got, if Eddy got something, I usually got something too. We got our bicycles at the same time. The only favoritism he may have shown was that I didn't get a bicycle until Eddy got a bicycle even though Eddy was younger than me . . .

Well, there wasn't a great deal of affection between us, but then he was gone a great deal of the time too. We never really established any relationship there.

During the time that the step-father was overseas during the war, and even when he was home, Tom's mother was frequently visiting bars and picking up men.

S: He knew of it, and uh, I think that when things got too bad he was glad he was in the Navy because then he was able to ship out someplace.

Th: This is the way he handled it.

S: Yeah, simply by running off from the situation.

When Tom was 15, his step-father died:

Th: What were your feelings about his death?

S: Well, I really don't remember that I had much feelings of loss, or feeling of anything. In some ways I was upset because I was afraid with him gone it was going to go back to somewhat the same situation as when he'd been overseas. But other than a selfish feeling of loss in that way, I don't think I really felt much.

Soon after this death, his mother married again.

Of this husband, Tom comments:

Oh--he was another Navy man, uh, retired Navy person.
(pause) He was probably the least intelligent, the least sophisticated of any of the husbands she had.

Yet, he was a person--well, by this time, both my brother and I were fairly well grown up and we never established any relationship there. I went away to college about six months after she married him.

He was pleasant enough, I was glad to see my mother get married again in some ways. Of course they had been living together for almost a year before they got married . . . it wasn't any shock or surprise.

Throughout his childhood, Tom had no strong masculine figure to relate to. His own father he never knew, his step-father was a passive person who handled situations by "running off." Nor was Ed able to relate to any other men in his environment.

Mother:

Well, she was, and still is, promiscuous, heavy drinker, verging on being an alcoholic--probably is an alcoholic, but it hasn't reached the stage where it affects her job.

(She began running around when the step-father was still home) then she started bringing fellows home from bars that she had picked up. Of course she was still fairly young, she was 32 or 33 years old. She wasn't bad looking at that time; now she's put on an awful lot of weight, but uh, she wasn't too bad looking then.

I remember one evening, we had a two story house there. I was asleep upstairs, and I heard my mother come in, and uh, knew there was somebody downstairs with her. About half an hour or so later I heard her screaming my name, "Tommy, Tommy." I ran downstairs and here she was completely naked and the man was trying to put

on his clothes, and she kept yelling at me to, uh, kick the son of a bitch out because she had brought him home, and she thought she was going to have a good fuck and all he had was a Dick the size of her little finger; and the man kept trying to sush her up and saying, "Think of the kid," but she was carrying on this way. This wasn't the only time that this kind of thing happened. Similar things have happened before and afterward.

One of the "other things" was the mother's attempt to have intercourse with her sons after she had been drinking. This first happened when Tom was 10:

We came out for a vacation, and mother was drinking heavily and picking up a number of men, and she was bringing them home and was having intercourse in the same room as my brother and I were sleeping. And then one evening she went out and came back and she hadn't picked up anybody, or something had happened, anyway she was alone. And so she started saying that she was going to bed with my brother and I, and started trying to play with my brother and I. And I got upset, and the only thing I could think of was trying to hide myself, and I jumped in bed and pulled the covers over me, and I remember that she said, "Ah good, that's where it's done anyway," and she tried to climb in bed. And so I got very upset about this and ran out of the apartment and didn't come back for a couple of hours. And by that time she had gone to sleep.

These incidents were never talked about:

When she's been drinking, she has blackouts, she says she doesn't remember, and I think she actually doesn't remember what happened.

When she was sober, she was a "cold" person, who was unable to show any affection to her sons. Tom frequently felt himself in binds that he was not able to resolve:

My mother would tell me to go out and play baseball. Yet if I did this, I couldn't play baseball if I took

off my glasses because I couldn't see. If I kept on my glasses I couldn't play baseball because if I broke my glasses I was going to get a spanking. So here I had the fear of breaking my glasses, yet I had the fear that if I didn't play baseball I'd be bawled out and spanked for this. And I was angry because I was put into a situation which--I'd be much happier having read or watching the game or something . . . I was afraid to do anything.

Another characteristic of his mother's relationship to him was her constant concern with homosexuality:

My mother has always insisted that my father was--my real father--was a homosexual, and that this was the reason that she divorced him. And she has been telling me this ever since I can remember. When I was 10 years old, living in Wisconsin, I wanted to join the YMCA and my mother refused because homosexuals hung out there. My mother has constantly had this homosexual kind of thing on her mind. She caught me and this other fellow, when I was about 12, uh, masturbating, and this simply confirmed the homosexual theory behind her.

She sought to make impossible any affection between the brothers:

Ever since I can remember, my mother has always put herself between us. She would deliberately tell me that Eddy had said something about me, then she would go back and deliberately tell Eddy that I had said something about him. Sometimes I would have said something, and sometimes Eddy would have said something but she would deliberately bring it out to make sure that the other person knew that something had been said, and many times she would simply make up stories. She would find out that I had done something . . . and then she would be sure to tell me Eddy told her, deliberately creating tension.

And in a similar vein, she discouraged him from having close friends outside the family. Speaking of a group he ran around with in high school:

. . . even though this was a fairly solid social group . . . Mother was constantly complaining that I should get out of this group because they were spending too much money, and she couldn't afford it--this type of thing, and yet we probably weren't any worse off than any of the other group, it was simply her criticizing my friends, and this was one way to criticize them. And then this other thing that kids shouldn't be interested in going to plays, in going to a concert, that they should be out playing football and baseball and so on, and uh, this still proved that there was something wrong with me, that only fruits and fairies were interested in the other thing . . .

Tom sees his fear of personal relationships as something

. . .

that evolves with my mother. As I say, she was a very cold person. She wanted, when I look at it, many times she tried to establish communication with me and my brother, but she was unable to do it, she didn't know how to go about it. I guess she was in somewhat the same situation that I am, she was reaching out, but didn't know how to go about it. As somebody would reach out to her, she would withdraw, and she did her withdrawing rather violently, sometimes, uh, turning on the person actually. I, uh, would become loving to her, and she would haul off and slap me because boys didn't behave this way, you know. This wasn't the masculine thing to do. And so now, I'm in some ways afraid to reach out to other people.

We inquired into the relationship he now has with his mother:

S: Fine, as long as we are 500 miles apart.

Th: What happens when you get within 50?

S: Well, uh, if we get within 50, then I go off and see her every other weekend or she comes down and sees me and we're able to get along together for a short time, as long as we're both fairly well plastered. When we're sobered up, she has her ways of doing things, and I have my ways of doing things, and uh, we just get on each other's nerves . . .

I blame her for some things that I know aren't her fault and then she blames me for a lot of things, and uh, I blame myself for things and she blames herself for things, and it puts us all on a--it's a very uncomfortable situation.

When Tom was in the hospital one time:

My mother used to come almost every weekend to visit me, I was on an open ward where I was able to leave over the weekend . . . mother used to come up there and pick me up and take me into the town of _____, and we'd go around barring it up, and man, I'd come back to the hospital almost completely drunk . . .

Tom also attributes his suicidal behavior, at least in part to his mother's influence:

I think that one of the things that brought this--uh--that possibly gave me suicidal thoughts, was when I was in Seattle in jail there, and my mother wrote me a "nice loving letter" in which she said something about--can't you find a piece of rope and just end all of this, get it over with. And I don't know if this was a suggestion that she gave me, that this might be a good way to get out of the whole thing.

She had attempted suicide in a half-assed way a couple of times, I don't know if she actually attempted it or if she just said she had done something, frightening my step-father . . .

Since Tom's mother was such an important person in his life, a glimpse into her own background is helpful:

. . . she was a cold person too, well, she'd never had much, in some ways, uh, her own childhood had been bad. She was adopted by a highly "Christian" family who were not adopting her because it was their Christian duty to do so, and they always let her know that she was not their kid, that she was adopted. And then she grew up over in Whittier which at that time was a small Church going town. She told me she was engaged to be married to a fellow who was studying to be a minister, until the fellow's mother found out she was adopted, and insisted that the engagement be broken . . .

She grew up in a cold family, herself, and has never been able to show much affection--it embarrasses her . . . and so, I was raised in this way and it embarrasses me to show affection towards her.

Childhood: Growing up, then, under these conditions of an absent father and a cold, controlling mother with deep seated sexual problems of her own, Tom's childhood was one of great unhappiness.

I was frightened of so damned many things when I was little . . . it seems like I was constantly frightened of something . . . I was afraid of the other kids, I was afraid of my mother, I was afraid of my step-father . . . I was angry at the people too, the anger and fear went in together.

I was very lonely there, and yet I kept trying to convince myself that this is what I wanted.

He tried to find ways to fight back:

During the war, when I was still in elementary school, I used to go to the school and tell the kids that I would pray at night time that the Japanese would bomb Los Angeles, which didn't put me on the best footing with them, and I was certain that the Germans were going to win the war, and uh, I'd go to the war movies and boo the American heroes and so on . . . (I would do this) simply, well, simply I think because they were fighting against the Americans and it wasn't so much that they were appealing as it was that I was pissed off at my mother, I was pissed off at my step-father . . .

I managed to get myself a nice little job delivering newspapers . . . which gave me \$30 a month which at that time wasn't too bad, and I used to take pennies and go up onto the--there was a porch that came off the school--I used to get up there on the porch and throw pennies to the other kids and watch them scrambling around down there and think to myself what asses they were scrambling for the pennies, and feel myself as being important that I was able to throw these pennies to them . . .

Th: Did you have any friends at all in elementary school?

S: I had one friend, who was very religious. I don't know why the hell I picked up with him, but he was the one friend at that time that I had and enjoyed being with . . . I had a girlfriend then, a little Jewish girl which was sort of--I was going on about the Germans, how wonderful they were, and yet the girl that I picked out to run around with was a little Jewish girl, and uh, we got along pretty well.

Another time, Tom speculates about his friendship with the religious boy:

I thought that he was wrong in many of his ideas, and so on, but at least he knew what he did believe, which was more than most of the other people I knew . . . At this time, when I knew Robert, or Bob, was a time when my father was overseas and my mother was doing a lot of whoring around in L.A. It seemed to me that at that time she had no set ideas on what was right and what was wrong on many of these things, and uh, Bob, even though I disagreed with him, at least I felt somewhat secure with him too in that certain things were right and certain things were wrong. And it wasn't just right or wrong for me, it was right or wrong for him too, but my mother was telling me, I shouldn't do this or I shouldn't do that, but I knew that she was doing the same things and worse things. She had a standard for me but none for herself, it seemed.

Things improved, however, when Tom entered high school. There were two factors to account for this: the family moved to a new community, and his step-father came home after the war:

But after I got into high school, things seemed to calm down. Of course this was after the war and my step-father had come back from overseas, and uh, he was living with my mother then, and uh, so on.

Th: You feel that made a difference.

S: I think so because everybody in elementary school . . . knew that my mother was picking up men in the bars and

all the kids knew it--the way she carried on they couldn't help but know it . . .

In high school, Tom entered a social group which was fairly constant. During this time he dated girls because it was expected, but preferred homosexuality.

History of Religiosity

Up to the age of ten, Tom's family was in touch with the Church almost constantly. The custom of church going goes back to his mother's childhood:

Mother was raised in one of these strong Christian families . . . she was forced as a kid to attend Sunday School and then church afterwards, and evening services and vespers on Friday, and mid-week prayer meetings and so on, so that by the time she got married she wasn't too interested in church, but she used it as a social means . . .

But for whatever reason, the family appears to have been in frequent attendance:

(They) went to the young married couples meetings, this sort of thing, but they would only attend the morning services, and I guess the young married couples Sunday School class, and then some social activities-- I remember church dinners, this type of thing.

My mother and step-father used to go frequently when we were in Missouri, recruiting duty there, and Oh, for awhile in San Diego we used to go quite frequently, but it was more of a social function for them than anything else . . .

Tom was always expected to go to Sunday School, and he did attend regularly for years. His memories of it are very scarce however:

Well, the only thing I really remember about it is an unpleasant experience (a fight) . . . Oh, I remember I

used to take the nickles my mother would give me and not drop them in the pot sometimes.

He remembers nothing of the teaching he received.

Church going for the family stopped suddenly:

After (age) 12, well, we were here in California and my step-father was overseas and mother stopped going to church immediately, well in fact she stopped going to church when I was 10 years old . . . I don't think she's ever been back since then . . .

But this has not been true of Tom himself. Exposed in early childhood to a moderately liberal Protestant tradition, usually the Methodist or American Baptist, Tom broadened his search for a church in adulthood.

Over the years he has had contact with the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Morman churches. He has made serious inquiry into Judaism and Roman Catholicism. He attended an Episcopal church for a time, and found a Church of Christ to be meaningful for awhile.

Although he cannot enter one denomination and become a participating member, and although he can criticize the doctrine and practice of any sect, and although he tends to pass off his habit of attending churches as a social function, still the Church is meaningful to him, and seldom in his life has he been totally without some contact with one.

Present Religious Posture

In each of our lives, the conditions of our past

continue to cast a long influence on our present and our future. And so it is for Tom.

For him, life and death are meaningless. Although religion appeals to him, and he senses that there ought to be some answers, he has yet been able to discover what they are. God is a distant and apathetic and mysterious being who seldom stops to listen to prayers, and never stops to answer them.

Tom has been unable to identify himself with any church, but he continues to look toward it believing that the key to his life is lost in there somewhere.

He feels himself in a moral vacuum, certain that there are standards and values in life, but uncertain what they are. And until he can discover these values, he will be at odds with humanity, and doomed to drift through an uncommitted life.

The Meaning and Purpose of Life:

I wish I could find out what the hell it was (the meaning or purpose of his life)--that's one of my problems, that I don't know what my purpose, what my meaning is. Right now I get disgusted with the work I'm doing because it seems like there's no purpose or meaning in it. And yet I look around and I say to myself, well now, what can I do that would have some meaning . . .

His associations then go to working in a mental hospital, social work, psychology, art, volunteer work, or some political activity. But all these sound hollow and

empty to him. The activities that would be meaningful to him, education or religion, he feels too unworthy to participate in.

He sometimes thinks that he should live life simply for the pleasure he can find, but this is not satisfying either:

I disapprove of hedonistic people, and I don't think they're very happy people. The few that I have known have tried to convince me they were happy--they weren't . . .

While in college he was a member of a group of students who were sure they were going to be drafted into the Korean War and killed, and on this basis they were entitled to live life for the fun it offered, but it was an unhappy group and he was among the most unhappy.

Sometimes it seems to him that the best he can do is live his life in such a way that he avoids hurting people--that this is the best he can expect of himself, but . . .

what's the purpose of living if you're just not going to hurt anybody. There must be some reason a little bit more than just that, there must be some purpose, there must be some purpose other than just not hurting other than just not hurting other people--to actually contribute something.

Yet just what that purpose may be he has not found, even in his fantasies. In his daydreams of his own future, he looks for nothing more than "middle class" status. He wants financial security and a standing of respect in the

community. He has no dreams of marriage (either heterosexual or homosexual) or of having children.

His plans characteristically have no people involved. He cannot see himself as being anything but a loner, a man who has the respect of his colleagues, but no close friends.

Even in his dreams, life appears dull and meaningless.

Death and Afterlife

His outlook on death is much the same as his conception of his own life, it is vague and meaningless:

. . . I have a vague conception of what death is. All that death seems to me is that it's like going to sleep and you just don't wake up and you just don't know anything. You're not missing anything because there's nothing to miss. I mean, after you're dead nothing else does bother you, really.

He is not sure about any kind of afterlife, but thinks there probably isn't one:

I don't really think there is a life after death, when you die, you're dead. Whatever purpose you're here for should have been done and accomplished, uh, this is it. One way or the other, but you make your heaven or hell here, and live through it now, but uh, I won't say that there isn't a life after death, I really don't know. I'm more strongly inclined to believe that there isn't than anything.

At the times he faced death by his own hand, he had the same vague conceptions:

(at the times of my suicide attempts) I didn't think about going to heaven or hell either one, but there

was the sort of childish thing of floating around someplace and watching my mother and other people feel sorry that I had done this. But I wasn't thinking of it as a life after death that I was going to continue--living this way, or be sent to hell for this, or heaven.

Religion

Tom senses that religion is important, and he would like to understand it better and be able to participate in the experience and the community. He discusses it at some length, and his remarks need little comment.

To me, religion is more or less just a philosophy of a way of living. I don't know if the religious people do any better materially, but many of them--or most of those who are actually religious seem to be happier spiritually, emotionally a little more satisfied. (Religion) might give me a little more understanding into what I'm doing.

Well, the one that I'm talking about, they seem more content. They're not necessarily happy or satisfied with what's going on, but they're not the type who would be willing to commit suicide either.

I'm not saying they're the type who go around saying that all is for the best, that God knows best, that God works in strange and mysterious ways--this type of thing, this I can't stand, that type of person makes me a little sick to my stomach . . .

. . . they seem to have some peace of mind, they're not always worried and upset and wondering what everything is about, they seem to--they seem to have found out a little bit about themselves.

(they can face things) without going off and jumping out of a window or else becoming Pollyann-ish and sitting down--they're about to work it out through themselves . . . they have an inner stability.

These are the "religious people." In contrast to

them, he finds that:

I've worked at it the wrong way. I've worked at it by controlling emotions and controlling my feelings, and uh, these people are able to feel emotions and able to express, uh, compassion and sympathy, and uh, love and well, probably even the other--hate and fear and anger too, but I've been working at it by controlling feelings . . .

God: Recalling the type of relationship that Tom had to his fathers, one might speculate what his conception of God would be. Tom is very concerned about God, but . . .

It's really vague to me. I think there probably is a God, but I don't think he is interested in what we as individuals are doing. That if he's interested in the world at all, he's interested in the world as a group, as a whole, but he's not interested in individuals in this thing. Well, the old analogy of the person watching the ant heap. You're interested maybe in how the group goes, but you're not interested in any one ant in the thing, and I don't believe--I can't personalize God to myself that strongly to think that he'd be interested in what I do as an individual.

Th: Do you think he has much knowledge of us?

S; Well, this is where I get contradictory. Accepting a God, it seems to me you're almost going to have to accept predestination. If God created things, and uh, supposedly knows how things are going to go, then he obviously knows how things are, and uh, knows what's happening.

I say he's not interested in us as individuals and yet I still think that probably--that were he to be interested in us as individuals that he would know exactly what was going to happen, how it was going to turn out.

I think he would know everything, but I don't think he cares. I don't think this was the thing, not as the individual, he doesn't care about me as individual . . . He might care about somebody like Schweitzer or somebody like Ghandi, but me as the individual he wouldn't give a damn about.

Describing the way in which his family used God as a force to discipline him, he recalls his parents saying:

God watches little boys, God knows what little boys are doing, uh all of this--if you tell a lie you'll go to hell, if you masterbate you'll go to hell, if you don't mind your mother you'll go to hell, if you swear you'll go to hell.

It was simply like at that time that about everything I did do I was going to go to hell. And when I was about 14, I discovered Man and Superman and Don Juan in Hell, and decided this was probably a more realistic description of what hell was like than the church's description.

On the basis of this it is not surprising that prayer is an empty experience for him:

I didn't expect God to be paying any attention to my prayer in one way or the other.

We then asked about his prayer life when he was a child:

It was mainly this simple little thing of "Now I lay me down to sleep . . .", this type of thing. Occasionally, Oh, yeah, during the war when my mother was out drinking a great deal and going around to the different bars, and wouldn't come home until they closed, around midnight I guess during the war, but uh, I remember, uh, I frequently would pray that she just wouldn't get home. That something would happen to her, uh, cause I knew damn well that when she did get home we'd have a fight or an argument or that she was going to come in drunk and be yelling and screaming, and uh, I don't know how serious the prayers were--Oh, I guess they were pretty serious at that time.

It was mainly selfish prayers, I guess most kids prayers are selfish--uh, God give me something.

After I got to be about 10 or 11 years old, and I would start to pray, I'd simply say to myself, "Well, there's hardly any use in this, I've never got any answer at all to my prayers anyway, nobody is listening," but I'd still go ahead and do it.

I don't think I was ever really angry that my prayers weren't answered because I really didn't expect them to be answered in the first place, it was just uh, something that I did unconsciously--hu, uh, would pray on occasion, but I really didn't expect any type of answer.

The habit of prayer, however, is one that he still clings to even today . . .

. . . like we had a broach taken out of the office and uh, I was afraid I was going to get fired from the job there, and I would say to myself, "Oh, God, please don't let me get fired from the job." I don't know if this is a prayer, it's a prayer in a way, you're addressing it to God, it's a selfish prayer, it's asking for something for yourself, and yet I really didn't expect God to be paying any attention to my prayer in one way or the other . . . I don't think he's listening.

But even this distant, detached God who cares so little for individual people that he just doesn't bother to listen to their prayers, or to receive their trust, still this God is important to Tom, and he tries to find some way to relate to him:

I don't feel that God is a person who is looking down on us, watching over us. I doubt if he's really very concerned about what does go on in the world. But I do believe that there is probably a God, and (finding a Church) is a form of possibly getting a little closer to him.

Finding this Church, and becoming a part of the chosen people who are a little closer to God is an important Goal in Tom's life, and one about which he is very concerned.

Church: For most of his life Tom has been in touch with some form of the Christian Church. In the last few

years, however, he has begun to look toward Judaism.

My real father was Jewish, but of course my mother divorced him when I was just a baby, I never lived around him, but Oh, part of the thing was I just couldn't accept the dogma of the Catholic Church, and the Protestant Churches in some ways didn't have as much dogma, but they were even more intolerant and ill-liberal, and the Jewish group seemed for the most part a fairly liberal, especially the Reformed Jewish group.

. . . I at one time started--about four years ago--to go over to the Wilshire Temple and take conversion lessons. I went through about two of them, and then started to get in trouble (cashing bad checks) and got embarrassed and never went back to the church.

This provides us with a clue as to what it is that prevents him from being able to enter the religious community.

I still feel dirty in many ways--morally dirty. I go there (a church) and even though I said they were more tolerant and liberal than others, uh, if the people knew that I was just out of the joint this would be a drawback that they probably wouldn't care to have me join the congregation, or else do just the opposite and become, uh, over sympathetic.

But this isn't the main thing--this is rationalization. I do feel morally dirty in many ways. It's hard to explain how I (feel).

I know that there are certain things that religion, any religion would disapprove of a person doing. I disapprove of doing them myself. But I am going to do them, I am doing them and I'm going to do them, and I know damn well I'm going to continue doing them, I have no intention of stopping some things I know the religious groups would disapprove of. It's sort of a hypocrisy to be going to them and attending services and saying you believe in these things and doing some things you know they're going to disapprove of.

And so although he feels drawn to the religious

community, he also finds himself unable to become involved.

I've been meaning to start going to one of the temples down here, but Friday nights something else seems to come up, and Saturday it's so much trouble to get up and go--I just haven't gone. It still appeals to me . . .

He finds the same dilemma in speaking to clergymen:

I've gone many times, not many times, but several times to see a clergyman. I've wanted to talk about, uh, the moral philosophical ideas, and yet, as soon as I get talking to him, I don't know, I get the feeling he'll laugh at my questions or something like this, he'll think I'm trying to give him a snow job to impress him. Yet there are things that have bothered me, yet I still can't question him about them.

One of the things I wanted to find out was, how the hell can I like myself when I'm doing things that I dislike other people for doing. And, uh, how can I feel that God has forgiven me, when I can't forgive myself. Philosophical questions in some ways, and yet, I can't bring them out to a clergyman.

Not all his contact with a religious community was this abortive, however. There was at least one contact that appeared to him to be meaningful, although short lived. This was when he was attending a Church of Christ . . .

Which I sort of liked because it was such a severe Fundamentalist group. They didn't worry about social philosophy in this group, it was strictly the Bible type of thing, everything was taken from the Bible. Their sermons were not involved with social activities, the race thing was never mentioned or anything like this, it was what God wanted you to do according to the Bible, and this type of thing . . . It was just the group's own sureness of what was right. Something that usually annoys me very much, this dogmatic type of thing. This is the way it is and there's no possibility of it being different.

Tom is looking to the religious community, then, for two benefits. He hopes that it can bring him into closer contact with a God in whom he believes, but who doesn't believe in him; and secondly, he looks to the religious community to provide him with a moral structure which is dependable and sure.

We need to look in greater detail at Tom's moral quandary.

The Moral Struggle: At first glance, Tom's problem with morality appears to center on his homosexuality, but a closer examination reveals that the problem is much broader than this:

It isn't just the sexual problem I have guilt on, I have guilt feelings about, uh, displaying any strong emotion--uh, love or hate, either one. I feel guilty if I show anger, uh, not just hate, but anger. I feel, uh, not so much guilty but that I'm making a fool of myself if I show pleasure--people may not like what I'm showing pleasure about . . . but I do feel guilty if I show the more unpleasant emotions.

He feels hypocritical for having a moral standard when he knows that he does not live up to it:

Funny, in some ways, this is one of my problems--it seems funny to talk and say that I have some moral ideas, but actually I do. And this is one of my problems that I dislike people who do certain immoral things like, uh, stealing I consider as immoral, and yet I find myself doing the same damn thing--so how am I going to like myself when I dislike other people that are doing this type of thing. I dislike sexually promiscuous people, and yet I find myself being sexually promiscuous--well how can I like myself for doing exactly what I criticize other people for?

He feels his homosexuality is morally defensible with one limitation:

Homosexuality is O.K. but for someone to molest a kid, that was a different thing, and I was very disturbed about this thing (when he was once caught doing this). I was very disturbed about this thing, and I knew all the time when I was doing it, what I was doing, and when I got caught it really dawned on me what the hell I was doing . . .

But his own attempts at suicide he sees as being immoral:

I think sometimes (suicide is) justifiable (morally). My cases, whenever I've attempted it, it never has been. I can't explain why . . . I try to justify it to myself, that a person--that this is his own life and that--you say God gave you this life and you shouldn't destroy it, my answer is that God gave it--that if God did give you this life then it's yours to do what you want . . . but this type of justification--rationalization--doesn't really go completely with me.

At times he thought seriously about finding a moral code that would guide his life, but he could never follow it through.

I thought about this myself . . . I will start building up a moral code, and then I'll say to myself, well this is a --it seems silly, I know what I'm like, if I start acting like this, everybody else will know what I'm like in the first place and they'll think what a damned hypocrite he is in behaving this way. I've found myself many times behaving in ways that I didn't want to behave simply because I thought that this is more or less what people expected me to do, and I couldn't do what I really wanted to do--doing things that I felt were, not necessarily morally wrong, but borderline cases.

Other people's expectations are more important to him than his own moral code, but when he acts on this basis, he is still left feeling uncomfortable:

. . . other people would think I was a phony for doing this (a moral act). I guess I was probably in some ways more of a phony by going ahead and doing it than refusing to do (an immoral act).

And so he is left feeling a moral failure:

What I'd like to be and what I'd like to do are not what I am by any means.

and with feelings of helplessness:

I start feeling, "Oh what the hell is the use of even fighting the thing." Because if they're going to change they will change, and if they're not going to change there isn't any use in my fighting it. If it's already set down by God that such and such is going to happen . . . and this gets into such a thing of sitting back and saying, "What's the use of even trying"?

I think that if any change is going to be done, it has to be done by me. Whether I can do it is another thing.

In addition to the feelings of guilt and estrangement from God whose forgiveness he cannot accept because he cannot forgive himself, Tom's moral dilemma makes it difficult for him to fit into his society.

Relationship to Humanity

Being accepted into society, or even having friends, is a major problem for Tom. He tries to moralize about it:

I think a person has a responsibility to live the best way he can and not--not just not hurt other people, but contribute something to the group.

He expresses his need for close human relationships in the most distant and impersonal terms:

You could say in some ways I'm a One Worlder . . . I'm a One Worlder . . . I dislike this type of thing that

I understand is going on in Russia--the being forced into living with others, this type of communal living. I think that people could be closer, could be more helpful, could be more considerate, more tolerant of each other.

This was one reason that I joined the AYD when I was a kid in high school, because I disliked what I knew was going on in the Negroes, the Mexican, the other minority groups. I dislike hurting other people, and I dislike other people who hurt other people. This is one reason I think Christianity would be fine if it were practiced as they preach, "love thy neighbor," and so on. This would be wonderful but too frequently it seems to be "love thy neighbor but if he doesn't seem to like what you're doing, turn around and kill him."

He makes some attempts at trying to understand why it is so difficult for him to relate to other people:

Actually I think one of the problems that I've had is that I have almost been too self-effacing many times. I've felt that other people have rights that I didn't have. It was their right to make noise, but I didn't have a right to complain about it; that it was their right to crowd in front of me in line, but I didn't have the right to protest--this type of thing.

The way it's inconsistent, of course, is that by my cashing checks, I was infringing on other people's right here--the store's rights or the owner's. But I never felt good about this, I never felt I was doing a right thing at that time when I did it, I realized it was wrong.

With this, as with the moral problems, he at times feels that it's not worth the struggle:

The way I would like to have it, the way I've tried is that if I leave other people alone, they leave me alone; that I have a right to do what I want to do so long as it doesn't bother anybody else.

But this resolution of the problem is a lonely resolution, and one that Tom is not happy with. He once

defined the basic problem as being the fact that he cannot love himself, and in not loving himself, he cannot accept the fact that other people might be concerned about him. He is suspicious of anyone who takes an interest in him, and makes the emotional assumption that such a person is going to take advantage of him. Intellectually he understands this, but the lack of trust persists in separating him from human involvement.

Capacity for Commitment

So far, Tom has lived a life almost totally in emotional isolation. His two close human contacts, his mother and a homosexual partner, have been destructive ones. We then began to inquire into his ability or desire to commit himself to a cause. We asked him if there was any cause that he felt might be worth dying for. He was confused at the question, he had always thought of his own death as an escape, not a commitment:

It's more of a negative thing, it's not so much that anything is worth dying for, as it is that (death) is to avoid things.

Then he thought more about it, and the idea had some merit to him, but the Cause was lacking.

. . . sometimes I'll feel that there are things that are worth dying for, and then I'll look around and the things that people seem to feel are worth dying for leave me cold.

He gave as examples the way people lay down their

lives for their country or for their religious faith, but he could not see the value in this, these things weren't that important.

He thought that if he were in a situation similar to that of the sinking of the Titanic, he would be willing to lose his own life so that the women and children could be saved. But his reasons for this decision were that, 1) he would enjoy the role of hero, and 2) he would hate the role of coward if he would save himself--he couldn't stand what other people would say about him. The actual fate of the women and children did not particularly interest him.

Tom feels like he would like to have a Cause, he would like to feel strongly enough about something that he would be willing to live or die for it, but he has not been able to find anything important enough to commit himself to it.

Summary

This subject is a man who never had a father who showed interest in him or concern about him, and today he has a disinterested God with whom he would like to be close, but whom he cannot reach either with prayers or through a religious community.

He had a mother who set down puritanical rules for

her son's behavior, but who herself lived a life of free abandon. He has projected onto the Church his mother's moralistic teaching, and finds himself living her life of amoral behavior.

As a child, his anger and shame set him apart from his peers, and today he finds himself incapable of establishing any creative relationship with humanity.

His identity is confused and uncertain, split between opposing poles. On the one hand he is a Puritan with stern moralistic concepts of right and wrong defined in black and white terms; on the other hand he lives a life that admits of no rules or standards. His moralistic side utterly rejects his behavior; but he can find no warmth or pleasure in the demands of moral asceticism. So rejecting these commands completely, he swings to the deviate behavior of homosexuality and alcoholism. But here too he is cheated of the warmth he seeks, for having committed these sins he must now be condemned by the moralistic mother who taught him God knows all and condemns all.

V. CAROL

Present Description

Carol is a 32 year old, Caucasian, single girl who works as an extra in movies and television. She is an attractive girl, with a nicely proportioned body, blonde hair, and an attractive face; but there is a non-sensual air about her so that she really cannot be called sexy. She seldom dresses to advantage, and sometimes appears in poor taste.

Her affect is often inappropriate, and although she speaks freely, she seldom shows the depth of feeling that her words ought to be carrying. She likes to laugh and keep things light mannered, and she has observed that she at times forgets entire hours of her therapy when it has touched important points.

She is subject to depressions which are incapacitating to the point where she is unable to go to work; occasionally drinks too much and has made numerous suicidal gestures, one of which required emergency hospitalization.

When in her presence, one associates about a small orphaned child who faces a bewildering Alice-in-Wonderland world. Life is a complex thing which seems to observe no rules. She responds in like manner, making her most

important decisions in an impulsive manner and then looking back and wondering why she did that.

Early Background

Carol's mother was 21 and her father 23 when she was born. Her mother, speaking to Carol's therapist, states openly that Carol was unplanned and unwanted. She, the mother, had never wanted a family and had never planned to have one. There were no other children in the family.

When Carol was nine months old, her mother took her to live with her grandfather who was:

a cranky old man... . real skinny and small and mean looking, he died a few years later. During the time Carol and her mother lived there, Carol's father was in and out. She remembers very little contact with him. Carol's mother and father were finally divorced when she was 10.

I was very happy when she got the divorce, because that meant that she and I could live together, and I was very happy because I wasn't close to my father at all, so I was very pleased with the whole thing . . . She never loved him anyway, so I guess that's the biggest thing. She said she married him only to get away from home. She wasn't in love with him, I remember her saying these things. I still don't understand why someone would get married when they weren't in love.

After the divorce:

We moved into an apartment, we lived in a very small town outside of Seattle. I think it was a small town and I never did like small towns, even as a child, I don't know why. I was very interested in dancing, so I took dancing since I was a little girl . . . that

was most of my interest all through school. I wanted to be a ballet dancer and that's what I studied.

Other childhood activities centered around dolls and movies:

I used to love dolls, I played with them all the time . . . I used to like baby dolls, the ones that you bathe and so forth, now I don't like those anymore, I like the pretty ones, with beautiful long dresses and the whole bit, the glamorous ones.

I went to the movies all the time. I liked to see movies where there was a lot of wealth around when I got older. When I was younger, I liked the musicals, I think I pictured myself doing this.

But dancing was the most important element in her life. She found that a small town had its limitations as far as the availability of dancing instruction goes, so when she was about fifteen:

. . . I pushed and schemed and everything to get out of there, and I got my mother out, and, uh, we went to Seattle which I liked very much, but that was awfully lonesome because I didn't know anyone. It was awfully difficult to make a change like that and I didn't realize that.

School was never enjoyable for her:

I didn't like school, I couldn't wait to get out. I dreaded going--didn't have too many friends. I couldn't concentrate, I just despised it . . . it was just misery for me.

When I was in first grade I didn't pass, and that always bothered me, I was always sick or something but anyway, I didn't pass the first grade, and I was always older, and I always felt I was different from the others . . . I felt self-conscious. Up until the sixth grade I always felt I was very tall, but I don't know if that was my imagination because I'm not very tall now, but sometimes people shoot up faster, but it wasn't out of proportion or anything, I wasn't an ugly child . . . I just felt different. I never felt I was very smart, it still bothers me, I just can't catch

on as fast as other people can.

It wasn't only the academic side of school that was difficult for Ella, the social life was a problem to her too:

I didn't get along with the boys too well, I mean I didn't like--I wasn't interested in dating--but I had a lot of girlfriends, but I wasn't interested in dating, I felt that boys didn't like me and I was very self-conscious around them. I thought I wasn't pretty enough to ask me out, which I realize was stupid, but that's how I felt--I felt that way. I had girlfriends that dated, I dated very little, I guess dancing was my whole interest in life.

But even her dancing didn't supply her with a solution to her troubles:

But dancing didn't satisfy me to a certain extent. Most of the girls who were my friends through dancing were so dedicated that they were of a different world. They wore different clothes and make up and that sort of thing . . . I didn't have that great drive. I could have been good, I had the talent, I know that, but I didn't have the burning desire to practice day after day. I thought there was something else I could be interested in . . . I wanted to go out, to date more, to be more like a girl, and these girls were not interested at all.

Mother

Carol's therapist at the SPC had an interview with Carol's mother, and her impression was that the mother was a very intellectualized, cold, and disappointed person. This is much the same impression I receive from Carol herself:

Well, she's not the motherly type, if you know what I mean. She's not, well, she's more like a sister to me. I'm close to her, but I'm not close, and I can't

understand that myself. Like, when I don't see a lot of her I miss her a lot, but, uh, she's never kissed me or anything like that--very distant. And, uh, I feel that a lot of times I'm sort of a burden to her because she'd like to go out and so forth. She's very pretty and had a lot of boyfriends.

(After the divorce) I was left to myself a lot. After I got home from school I was always by myself. She never did too much with me, like she does more with me now than she did when I was younger. She'd never go on picnics, like we'd go down to have picnics and she hated it, she thought they were boring, and she'd never go to the movies or anything like that. So, uh, I guess I never got to know her too well, it was strange . . .

Carol's mother was an "outcast of her own family." She hated both her father and her brother, and never got along with her sister.

So distant were they, that even though they continued living together after Carol had left school and was working, Carol never felt she could turn to her mother for help. At one time, after Carol had impulsively quit a job, she was in turmoil:

I didn't know which way to turn, I didn't know what kind of work to go into, I didn't know who to talk to about it . . . it was a new life turning over and I had no idea of which way to go. And my mother, I wasn't close enough to her to discuss it, she didn't even know I was going with a married man . . . (Later) she said to me, "that's where I failed you, I should have stepped in and done something." And she should have, but I never talked about it, and she never did, and if she ever had tried to interfere, I don't know what I would have done, because she couldn't tell me anything--I knew it all. But she should have done something, I feel.

But as cool and distant as the relationship was, Carol has never been able to free herself from it. During

the same crisis as mentioned above, Carol decided it was time to try and make a break:

I didn't know what I wanted exactly . . . so, I don't know, I just made my decision suddenly. I'd lived with my mother all the time and I wanted to get away . . . so I told her, "I wanted to leave, get out, but I don't have any money saved, would you lend me the money, and I'm going to move to San Francisco, but I'm going to get an apartment with another girl before I leave."

At the time I didn't know why, but now I know, I couldn't make both breaks at once. I couldn't leave Seattle and my mother too. This was my way of squeezing out. My mother couldn't understand if I wasn't going to leave Seattle, why I would leave her and go into an apartment with another girl. And I said, "Well so-and-so needs a roommate and I'd like to try it because I never have before. So I moved in with this girlfriend of mine, and I liked it, I was very happy with her."

This was only for three months or four, then I moved to San Francisco. It was very hard. I kept going back to Seattle all the time. I missed my mother--I couldn't break away. It's ridiculous, but it was hard for me.

The attachment remains even today:

I feel a tremendous obligation to her. I don't know that's what I'm trying to understand now. I spend a lot of time with her and I leave and feel I haven't accomplished anything, I feel she depends on me too much to make her happy, I feel I have to make her happy. She makes no effort to go out, she has no friends, no boyfriends, and she's a very pretty woman. It bothers me so much.

Carol's mother was "very surprised" when informed about her daughter's suicidal behavior and expressed the opinion that the SPC, "was not helping you very much." In addition, the mother continues to supply her daughter with all sorts of pills--including sleeping pills--which she

has available to her through her job in a doctor's office.

My mother said something to me the other day, she said, "I hate weak people, if there's anything I can't stand, it's a weak person." I realized it was herself she was talking about.

Father

For a long time Carol would not talk about her father. She passed him off as an unimportant person in her past who was never around, and who didn't even provide financial support after the divorce:

I don't even know him, I was never close to him and I have no contact with him now because I don't want to. I don't care for him, and felt that he spent no time with me and didn't care about me, so that's how I feel about him.

But one cannot so easily pass off a relationship with one's father, and later Carol brought the subject up again:

I thought about him lately because I found out that, uh, he was in San Diego recently. He never even contacted me, so that made me upset. Uh, did I tell you about the letter I wrote him? Ha Ha, that's probably why he didn't call me, but I wrote him this letter about a year ago . . .

I had thought about it for a long time, and then I wrote this letter to him. I told him that he'd never been a father to me, and that he'd disappointed me very much, and when I needed him he was never around, and that he'd done a lot of damage to my life and that it's too late to repair it, and that as far as I'm concerned I never want to see you again, I don't want any connection with you--and so I never heard from him again.

Oh, I never heard from him anyway, I mean, he's not the type who writes, and he's too tired to pick up a phone, and so I never heard from him again. But I

always thought maybe he would at least try to call me, or you know, something, but he never did.

And then when I found out from my Uncle in San Diego that he was down here for a couple weeks, I just couldn't believe it . . . I thought he might call and ask me to come and see him, and I would have, if I had known he was here, I would have gone down to see him, but he didn't--it really disappointed me.

And it's funny, when I heard (that he might be going to a hospital in Seattle), I thought that if he goes to Seattle I'll fly up and see him, because then he'll be by himself (away from his second wife and daughter), and I can see--I feel I should talk to him and see him. Because the only thing I've ever heard is my mother's side of everything. And I don't care about him, and yet I feel a need for a father and I thought if I could talk to him myself and get to know him, with no one else around, it would be good for me. But he didn't go to Seattle . . . When he was in San Diego, I couldn't understand why he wouldn't try to reach me . .

Religiosity

Carol's family was never a Church going family, and she was practically untouched by organized religion:

I went to Sunday School a few times, but, uh, I didn't understand what they were talking about. I remember one time I went when they said they were having a party, that's about all . . . And my mother never went to church, I never remember her going. I went with my Aunt--her sister--a few times. I remember she gave me a Bible once for my birthday, which I gave to someone eventually.

I remember praying vaguely (as a child), I don't remember why. I think it was when I wanted something, where now I find a need for it when I'm depressed or something. As a child it was, if I could only have this--I'll do that.

But recently Carol is experiencing an interest in religion:

Within the last year it changed tremendously. I don't know (why). When I lived in this apartment by

myself I used to go to this church across the street quite often. I tried that, but then I wouldn't go every Sunday and I'd feel guilty about that. Here I am living across the street from the church and I can't even get ready and walk across and go. And I enjoyed it, I liked the minister and everything, and I just didn't go, I guess I was lazy.

But more recently this has begun to change:

I go to church more now than I used to, and I'm more interested in, uh, going to church now than I was, and hearing sermons. They interest me very much.

I have become very interested in Positive Thinking. I've read this one book by Dr. Joseph Murphy, The Process of the Unconscious Mind. It's very good, it really helped me a lot along with changing my own thoughts . . . you are what you think, and if you think certain things you will do them, and so forth. And so I'm slowly trying to change my way of thinking through this. It's sort of science of the mind type thing.

But he's religious, he brings God into it a lot. So he has his lectures on Sunday, in a theatre, but it's like a church and I go to these quite often, and I find something that satisfies me very much . . .

He gives me something to look forward to, he always talks about goals and things. If you change your thinking you can have anything, and I like that, that way of thinking. And this is completely opposite of all the people I've associated with--in my childhood anyway . . . I've never been around people who felt--my mother's not a positive thinker. She keeps dampening things, she never gets excited. Like I get so excited about things, like when I was going to take a trip or do something or buy something, and I still do. I have this enthusiasm and she doesn't have it, it's depressing to me.

You have to think right first, then all these things can change. I don't just read his books, I read others too, and when I read his books it helps me, it really does, and I feel it is constructive, and he's a good thinker and everything, and I feel that if I can keep thinking this way, plus coming here and everything, that's really going to help me.

But it's hard to change all your thoughts, you know, from not thinking positive to doing all these things . . . What you feed your subconscious mind, your actions will come out this way. If you come out and say, "I can't afford it, I can't do it"--I have done this to myself so many times, it hits home with me--that pretty soon your subconscious mind is going to work it out so you can afford this, you can do this, I really believe that's true.

God

She is confused about how or if a God fits into her present system of religious belief:

Well, I believe that there is one, I don't know what he's like, I've never seen him. I guess it's something no one knows really. I guess everyone forms certain opinions, I don't know how you get them, I guess somewhere along life . . . I guess there is one . . . I think he does forgive people for what they do, and I feel that, uh, maybe I haven't forgiven myself for some things I'm doing that I don't like to do.

Prayer

Carol thinks that she prays "maybe three or four times a week," mostly when she's depressed, but she's unsure of why she prays or what the function of prayer is for her:

I think the main thing is that I want to be happy, and I don't know quite how to do it. I'm trying to find a way to be happy, and not feel miserable like I am.

Death

The thought of death upsets her:

I've never been to a funeral, I won't go to one. I'm scared. And I don't believe in--I believe when

somebody's dead they're dead. I don't believe in standing and crying over their coffin. I don't believe in any flowers or any of that. I think you should treat them nice when they're alive. If somebody dies, they always have nice things to say, and then when they're alive they don't say anything. I don't believe that. I want my flowers when I'm alive and can enjoy them.

I've decided I'm going to be cremated, because that eliminates everything . . . I don't see why that would have any effect on (an afterlife). I'd rather do that than being buried in the ground. I don't like that feeling. It's kind of cold, and you know, it scares me when I think of that. I don't want to think of being that way.

Her thoughts about an afterlife are mixed:

I believe in the hereafter . . . I've always felt there's no heaven and hell. I've always heard that your hell is here, and that when you die it's going to be better. I feel that we're probably here to learn things, both by ourselves and with other people, and that some will make it and some don't.

I believe (the afterlife) is good. I can see everything sunshiny and warm. I can't see (hell) . . . I don't know (if everyone who dies goes into the afterlife) . . . Yes, (I think I will), I've always thought that, even as a child. I used to think of all the streets being sort of gold and everything very pretty. I never thought about that for years, but I remember thinking that now. But maybe that's a fairy tale coming at me . . . I never saw any trees. I think of it as a city, not a modern city, but something that was very old, and everything was very nice . . . it's just very peaceful, and I've come to the conclusion recently that the most important thing is peace of mind, if you don't have that you have nothing.

Her fantasy of heaven does not include any people, nor is there any presence of God. It is a lonely but beautiful city. We asked her if she were afraid to die:

(silence) Uh, I don't know. I don't think I am, but, uh, that's a hard question to answer. You don't

really know, you know. I certainly don't think it could be much worse than a lot of things that happen here. And sometimes I think, which is completely contradictory to everything I've said, that sometimes I think that when you die, you simply go to sleep, like sleeping--only with no dreams.

I've always said, when I die, I hope it's in sleep, I'd like to be home in bed, asleep. I guess (suicide by sleeping pills) is how to make it come true . . . If it was (at all on my mind when I attempted suicide), I don't remember it. I wasn't thinking about what was going to happen afterwards, I was thinking, I just wanted to forget, get away from stupid things.

Patterns of Relationships

The world of human relationships is a mysterious one for Carol. She feels more comfortable relating to women than to men, but she senses that men are important to her. Her occupational history includes teaching dancing, working in charm schools, and now as a movie extra. Her goals in life are vague, and her sense of her own identity is confused:

No one has ever told me what I should do or how I should be . . . or if they have I don't remember. I have sort of, in my own way, thought out how I should be, and how people should be, and this is why I get disappointed all the time in myself and other people, because they don't turn out how I think things should be. Like I think people should go to church and should do nice things to people and they should be honest and trustworthy--but they aren't usually.

She continues to work on the problem of her own identity:

I'm trying to decide what kind of person I am, I don't know. You know, this is strange, because besides my personality, I've always been confused on how I should dress, what I should wear, the type of clothes whether I should be this type or that type. They

usually type you in charm schools . . . I've never known what I was--ever. Because I fit in all types a little bit . . . I can't be identified in one way.

And I have mixed feelings too, and I don't know what I believe about a lot of things, like, uh, like philosophies of life and so forth. I'm sort of sure, but then I'm not definite, and I try not to be influenced by people. I've got to have a philosophy of life for myself, without outside influences so that I know where I'm going, so then I can choose which little railroad track to go on.

I want to know who I am, where I'm going to go, and then I'll know how to get there. I have no doubt in my mind, once I make up my mind I can get it. I know I can do that.

Because of her lack of identity, she sees herself as being very subject to the influence of other people:

I think slowly I'm trying to latch on to something constructive, something that won't fail me. I am searching . . . I'd like to know myself, because I don't know myself I get very confused.

I'll think I do, and then I'll be around somebody who'll say something and then I don't know what I think, and I've always been able to understand both sides of the story, which is very good sometimes, but not for me, I get too confused . . . You can't fight as hard then, if you feel neutral between two sides of something--you don't know where to focus your time and attention.

This confusion makes moral decisions difficult:

One side of me says, get all you can, all the money you can and all the presents. The other side of me says, that's not the right thing to do.

She shared her dilemma with her mother one time, but could not accept the advice:

. . . and then I told my mother about it, and she said, "Well get all you can," and I was stunned. I can't understand it (why she was stunned) because of

the way I was raised and the friends I've had--they've been gold diggers from the word go.

Even in discussions with her boyfriend, she's not certain whose words are coming out of her mouth:

He's even told me, "I can tell when you've been talking to one of your girlfriends." And I have. Many times when we've had arguments and all, and he'll say, "Who have you been talking to now?" He can sense that it's not me, it's somebody else talking.

I've always been this way, but I've never been able to say it, or understand. I've always been influenced by friends, they've influenced my whole life. . . .

There is strong likelihood that one root of Carol's suicidal attempts is her extreme suggestibility. Her therapist at the SPC puts it this way:

I think Carol's a person who's easily influenced. She lived with two girls for a period of time after she moved out from the mother, and one of the girls was suicidal. Carol saw this as this girl's way of handling a problem, handling stress, and you know, this is the way to do it.

I think she's had so little in terms of experience, and so little in terms of good identification--you know, how do you do things, how do you handle stress, how do you get mad, how do you really live--she has had so little, really, in terms of an identity, who she is, what she likes, what she enjoys, how to get close to any other human being, be it a man or a woman.

The same thought has crossed Carol's mind:

I wonder if I was terribly influenced by them (she had two roommates who attempted suicide), because it had never entered my mind, and then on the other hand, I think, well, I can't really talk about that to anyone, because that's really a weak person . . . you know, if you're that influenced that if someone's going to kill himself and you say, well I am too--so that sounds--but I didn't do it over night. It was quite a long time, a couple of years. I did it in

stages, I realize now, because the stages, when you start taking, like a couple pills--sleeping pills--even strong ones to knock yourself out--something's wrong. I mean unless you're just tired, you take maybe one to get a good night's rest and get up and go to work. But that wasn't my purpose, and I can see this so clearly now

Another factor that is important in understanding Carol's ways of relating to herself and other people is the strong quality of her repression. She recalls very few feelings which she experienced as a child, and not very much factual information. More than that, it is hard for her to get in touch with herself here and now:

I'm very good at forgetting things. I can talk to someone, and if it's anything personal, if I found myself, like coming here, I would have a session, and--I wasn't even aware of this at the time--I'd walk away and couldn't even remember what I said. It's ridiculous, I'd walk away and I couldn't even remember what I said, anything that was said--five minutes later, what did they say?

They would hit certain points that I really thought, "Gee, I understand, and that's going to help me," and then I'd forget it. And I'm always blocking out people too--I'd build a stone wall up and they can't get to me--certain people can, not too many. I don't understand that at all.

I sort of disassociate with everything that's happened, it doesn't seem like me, it's over and done with. I'm in a state now where I don't know exactly what's going to happen, I don't know, and it's odd, when I talk about these things, it's a strange feeling.

Sometimes it has somatic effects:

Sometimes when I'm, like seeing my therapist, sometimes, well probably it's because it's talking about things that I don't want to talk about, or finding clues to different things, I feel dizzy.

Being so out of touch with herself, Carol frequently makes decisions that seem detached from her own will:

Suddenly I decided I couldn't see him anymore, this is the way I make my decisions, I don't know where they come from, but they're always there I guess.

She once quit a job in this way:

I finally quit on impulse, it took me three months to get over the shock of leaving. I just went dead, you know. For three months I was quite upset, I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do anything.

This is one factor that makes her a dangerous suicidal risk:

I think, my gosh, I can't believe it now--the pills I was swallowing at different times. How a person could change so fast--I don't get it.

Because Carol is so much out of touch with herself, and finds warm interpersonal relationships almost impossible for her to foster, she is a lonely person:

I don't think I'm ever going to get married--and I've always thought this . . . it scares me . . . I hate to think of myself as always being alone . . . that frightens me very much. The older I get the more it scares me . . . I don't like to be alone anyway, I can't stand it.

I've never realized that I wanted this or needed this as much as recently. I've realized that I do need someone--the right person--and most of the men (I've gone with) are the wrong type for me completely.

Carol's relationships with men have been unhappy ones, and she's tempted to give up trying to relate to men, but she recognizes that she would like a good relationship with the right man.

The most unhappy times of my life--I'm always unhappy when I'm with a man. The happiest times of my life have been when I'm not involved with any man, I'm happier, I can think better, can do more things. When I'm involved with some man I'm always depressed and unhappy, it never seems to work out . . . I guess I'm looking for someone who'll give me what I want and need.

But she continues to date married men or men who are otherwise inappropriate as marriage material. She assumes every relationship with a man is going to turn out badly for her.

I always think the man's not going to turn out. Recently, after having intercourse with a current boyfriend:

I thought to myself, what am I doing here? And I thought, well, I'm wasting my time again, he's not that interested in me. He doesn't care about me . . . He doesn't give me the attention I would like.

As I was sitting there talking to him, I almost got up and left, and I've felt that way many times, I just want to get up and walk away from the situation because then I don't have to face it.

Carol has been pregnant twice, and went through abortion twice, both times resenting the fact that the man didn't stay around to be with her. During the course of this research she entered the hospital for some minor plastic surgery:

I was a little scared, and I thought to myself, here I go again all by myself. Because everytime I do something that's sort of a traumatic experience in some ways, I'm always by myself . . . there's never a man around when I need one. And the fellow I'm dating now quite a bit, that I like, he didn't see me in the hospital or send me flowers or anything . . .

And why?

. . . because I didn't tell him I was going in, and I felt kind of bad about that.

The pattern she follows with men is now too clear to miss. She writes her father saying she never wants to see him again and then is hurt when he doesn't call. She deliberately doesn't tell her boyfriend she's going into the hospital and then is hurt when he doesn't visit her there. She dates almost exclusively married men and then feels like she is doomed never to marry. The pattern begins to reveal itself even to her.

I think about this every once in a while, I wonder if I sort of maybe do it on purpose . . . Most of the men I've latched myself onto have been married, or men that are no potential for marriage . . . When a man does get serious, I feel trapped . . . I get petrified inside.

Another fear which Carol experiences is that of having children:

I don't want any children, that's the only thing that bothers me (about marriage), I'm scared to have children. I'm scared to have the child physically, I don't want to go through the nine months, and I'm scared of the responsibility afterwards. I don't want to be responsible for someone's life. I like children, and I used to teach them from three years up, and they all liked me and I'd get along with them very well, but just to have one of my own--I couldn't do it. I'm lucky I never got married up to now, because if I was married and all of a sudden I was to have a child, I don't know, I don't know what I would do, I couldn't do it. . . .

When she does become pregnant she experiences a panic reaction. Last year she suspected she was pregnant,

had tests run, and received the affirmative results on Christmas Eve Day. She had the abortion on the day after Christmas.

My first thought was to have something done immediately so I wouldn't have the baby, I couldn't wait even one day, I just thought, what if something happened that the doctor couldn't take me, or I can't get there . . .

After the abortions she handles the guilt feelings by trying to seal them off, but this is only partially successful:

I've never felt that it's killing someone . . . if you're only a few weeks along, but I don't know, I just, I don't think you should have a baby if you're single, and I would never marry anyone just because I was pregnant . . . Well, I still don't feel it's exactly the right thing to do, but I don't know why really . . .

I did it immediately, I wanted to do it so I wouldn't have to think about it, just block it out of my mind, I just wanted to do it, get it over with, and forget it, and never think about it again.

When I see children the age mine would have been, it always makes me feel funny, I don't know why, I always thought it would be a little boy, I don't know how I know this, and I see little boys about three and four years old, and I think, well, that could have been mine. I don't know why I think this . . . I feel sad. I don't know why I feel this way. I'd like to know, because, I told you, I don't want any children. I'm scared to have them. Yet if I'm scared and feel I don't want one, why would I feel this way?

Suicide

We have delayed our discussion of Carol's suicidal behavior until now, because in order to understand it we

first had to examine her problems of her own identity, her extreme suggestibility, her strong repression, her impulsiveness, her feelings about having children, and her relationship to men.

Carol is subject to severe depressions:

. . . I can't even go to work, I'll call up and cancel, as much as I like the work, I'll call up in the morning and say I'm sick and can't go . . . That's the worst feeling I think I've ever had, that helpless feeling that, uh, I don't know what to do.

But in spite of these, Carol never thought of, or attempted suicide until she was exposed to the suicidal behavior of two roommates. She describes the incidents this way:

Well, I never felt this way (suicidal). The girl in San Francisco--I was living with her, I sprained my ankle and I had these pain pills. She came home one night--she was out until about one--she said, "I feel just terrible, would you give me one of your pain pills," and I gave her the whole box and she took it. I didn't know if she'd taken them or not, she never told me anything like this before, and I had never run across it with anyone.

She said, "my vision's blurring," she couldn't see, and I really got panicky. And she wouldn't let me call anyone, so I went out to the phone and called her boyfriend and he came over and we got her to the hospital. She refused to have her stomach pumped--she screamed and hollered and carried on. They finally gave her something I guess.

The results of the incident were that the boyfriend moved both of them to a much better hotel where they lived until the friendship between Carol and the girl broke up.

A few years later she was sharing an apartment with another girl:

Another girl I was living with, she tried to kill herself. She took a whole bottle of pills of some kind--I don't know--she almost died. She was in the hospital for three days, it was very serious.

At the time she was unaware that these suicide attempts had influenced her:

I went with her to the hospital, and I remember when I walked out the door, I said kind of kiddingly, "Well, if I ever do it, I'll think of a different way." Because it never entered my mind, even though I didn't have too much money, and I was depressed about things, it never entered my mind to do away with myself. It was a different world. I couldn't understand about how things could be that bad . . . I could never picture myself doing anything like this, I couldn't imagine how anyone could be that upset.

But it wasn't long after that that change started taking place:

But then I started drinking more, I never used to drink very much, and then things started changing. It happened so fast I still haven't pinpointed when. I'd go out and get bugged with different men about things, and I'd feel like drinking more.

Then she started dating a man who offered to set her up in an apartment:

It was what I thought I wanted . . . then I was drinking a lot, and he was a heavy drinker, and we'd go out and we'd drink a lot, as many drinks as I wanted, and I'd drink right along with him--he'd have one and I'd have one, which usually you can't do, you know, he was a heavy drinker. And so pretty soon my immunity to alcohol really started changing, and I'd like to drink, and when I was around him I had to have a drink . . .

Finally she accepted the apartment:

I guess I was in love, I don't know now, and so I moved into an apartment of my own and he paid for it. The night I moved in, I took some pills because I was unhappy. Because I was all by myself, you know, it was a very strange feeling.

This was the beginning of the pills:

Uh, slowly but surely I started playing around with sleeping pills; I started storing up on them from my doctor, and I'd take a couple, then I take 3, 4, then I'd take as many as 6 which would knock me out for quite a long time. I never took enough that I would be sent to the hospital or anything--until recently. It just, uh, seems like a dream now, about the whole thing--I didn't want to think.

Shortly thereafter she broke up with this man, but the pill taking continued:

There were different times during the--when I would think about it seriously (suicide)--like taking 6 or 8 pills. I think the most I ever took was 6 along with the drinking which would knock me out quite a while. There'd be different times like maybe every few weeks or something, or like every two or three months I'd feel this way, it would go in cycles. And it would always be when I was drinking, mainly because I don't have the urge when I'm sober. I start drinking, then I'd let up my feelings. I'd be unhappier, and also I've got the nerve to take the pills. I know when I'm sober what they'll do to me--I know they'll kill me . . .

The thought of taking enough to kill herself was more on her mind now, but still with ambivalence:

I don't think I really want to die, I just want to forget . . . But when I'm drinking things always seem worse of course, but then the thought of dying didn't seem quite as bad . . . So, one night, I was home by myself . . . I thought I was going to do it. I was scared, because I'd done this before, but I got scared and I wanted some kind of help . . . I wanted somebody to tell me not to do it.

At this point Carol is in real danger of impulsive

action. She describes one serious attempt:

. . . (her boyfriend) didn't call me today and so I started drinking in my apartment. I started taking some pills--two, three, I don't remember. It's so foggy, I don't remember, because I was drinking too. But I wasn't that drunk, but I started crying, I was very unhappy, left alone, disappointed and everything, and then I thought, "Oh nuts!" and went back and took the rest of them.

She then had second thoughts, became frightened, and called a girlfriend who rushed her to a hospital.

The pattern of Carol's suicidal attempts is usually constant. There is a man involved and the relationship is going badly for her, she begins to drink, she then takes just a few pills to forget, to block out her life for awhile, and then follows her impulse and takes a lethal or near lethal dosage.

It may be noted that Carol has not really made the decision yet to kill herself. But it should also be noted that she never makes important decisions except on the basis of impulsivity. Her life is lived on the basis of blocking out unwelcome reality, to get away, to forget. The decision to make the block a permanent one will be an impulsive decision.

Life:

Carol has a confused and shallow view of what her life is, or what she would like it to be. We inquired into her life goals, her hopes, her expectations:

Well, my immediate one is that I want to work as much as I can and be successful in the work I'm doing.

When asked about more long range hopes:

I would like to be happily married, I'm not as career minded as I used to be . . . I'd like the security and, uh, I'd like someone I could count on, that I could do things for, and take care of, but I don't want any children.

But when she takes a second look, she's not so certain that this is what she wants:

I think a lot of thoughts are going through my mind now, and I'm--I hate to say the word "so confused"--but I've gone through so many changes in the last few months, like leaving my apartment, leaving Bill, leaving the studio club, and all these things, and also different thoughts that are going through my mind, like uh, I'm sort of a different person in a way . . . I'm thinking about my future more, and why I've never been married, and whether I want to get married . . .

One goal is clear:

I've always wanted to be rich, have a lot of money, it's very important and still is . . . For one thing (money) would mean something I could depend on and I knew it was there. If I had a lot of money I knew I could have it whenever I wanted to . . . because people always let me down, and at least if I had the money it wouldn't let me down . . . I don't think this would bring me the happiness I really would like, but, uh, it certainly would help. I'd be a lot happier with a mink coat on. The men I've attracted in the last few years have been the men that could give me these things. It seems that every man I have chosen in the last few years has been richer than the other one.

The whole question of Values is confusing to her. She says that having a set of values is very important to her but:

I've never really known--I'm still trying to find exactly what my values are, and just because someone

says something to me, I shouldn't always change, because I still waver when I talk about different things.

I suggested that she was at a crossroad in her life:

. . . that's a very good way to explain it, that's exactly the way I feel, like I'm standing there and I'm up above everyone else looking down at them and I have a decision now to make whether I want them in my life. I feel this way, and I could make all these decisions, I don't feel petrified, I feel a little frightened, and uh, I don't know quite what to do about some of them.

She feels that if once she decided on which road to travel, once she made some key decisions (although what exactly they are is still vague), she would be capable of carrying them out:

The few things I have been interested in doing, it seems like I have done it. If I ever set my mind to it and decide to do something, I'll find a way. I have proved this to myself in--not big ways--but for me they have been.

But action is not always so easy:

. . . but I write all these things down to do and I can't do them. I wonder now, why I can't . . . I find some excuse, then I feel guilty because I can't. And I'm guilt-ridden anyway about lots of things. I hate myself for it, when I haven't really tried. I don't know what I do this, this is my biggest stumbling block in my work now . . .

To make important decisions, and to carry them through in action demands commitment. To speak to Carol of a sense of personal commitment is to introduce her to a world of which she has no knowledge. She avoids any kind of personal commitment to a man, to having children, to a profession, to a cause, to an ideal. When a personal

relationship begins to look as though it might develop into one which asks commitment, she shys away. We discussed why it was so difficult for her to accept presents from her boyfriends:

I couldn't just take (a present) from anyone. Well, I just couldn't. If I could take the gift and never see them again, I wouldn't feel bad. But if you take the gift, then you sort of obligate yourself, and I don't want to be obligated to anyone. If he calls me for dinner next week then I sort of have to go because I accepted the gift, and I don't want to be in that position that I have to do something I don't want to.

Conclusion

During the course of the research, Carol reported three dreams, which she immediately disowned. We mentioned in the beginning that she struck us as having an orphan quality about her. Perhaps the dreams will illustrate this.

Dream 1:

I was living at the studio club, and I had a little girl, and she was about four or five, and I remember that I was going someplace to work, or something, and I was taking her with me. She was living with me at the club. We were dressed alike, and I remember it's one of the dresses I now have, and we had the same dress on. And then I remember I saw Lee (boyfriend) afterwards, and I thought to myself, well, how inconvenient to have a little girl and all this trouble I have to go through, because I want to see him without any complications--that was my thought.

Dream 2: (Reported by the SPC therapist)

She went to a woman's house. The woman was like a sister, and when she got to this house the sister's husband answered the door, and she was inquiring about

her baby. She didn't want to see the baby, but she just wanted to be assured the baby was all right.

Dream 3: (After being informed that her therapist would have to leave in two months)

I was on location somewhere, it was away from where I live. There were a lot of people, and they said something about that they didn't want me anymore, that they were leaving. So they all left, then there was no food around, and then I remember--it's so silly--there were these five gallon containers of ice cream all over, with ice cream in them, different flavors. They weren't all full, they were like leftovers--almost to the end. I love ice cream, and that was the most distinct thing in the dream--it's ridiculous.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF CASES

I. DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

A survey of the developmental histories of our five subjects reveals a high degree of commonality in many of the crucial elements of childhood experience.

Mother: In none of the cases was the child's relationship with his mother a satisfactory one to him.

Carol's mother made no secret of the fact that she never wanted a child and was never pleased with the role of being a mother. She expressed no desire to be close with Carol and considered her to be nothing other than an unpleasant burden.

In recent years, Nancy's mother has become an important and supportive person in her life, but during Nancy's childhood Nancy was an embarrassment to her. She was the daughter of an unloved husband whom Nancy's mother divorced, and Nancy was more a burden than anything else. Nancy's mother was depressed and detached from her daughter, and she failed to offer Nancy any support in Nancy's struggle with her stepfather.

Betty's mother was a depressed, childish woman who willingly placed the responsibility for the home and the nurture of the two younger children in her daughter's hands.

She frequently flew into violent rages which were frightening to Betty. She found her real interests in life outside the home.

Harry's mother was a cold, caustic woman whom nobody liked. She did her best to destroy her son's masculinity, dressing him in female attire, and keeping him under her control as long as possible.

Tom was faced with a mother who made no attempt to conceal her alcoholism or her promiscuity either from her family or the community. She was violent, manipulative, aggressively incestuous, and incapable of any warm or helpful relationships with her son.

None of these mothers wanted her children, and all of them found the parental roles alien to their own needs. Each was rejecting in her own way and at the same time was a key person in the child's early life.

Father: The fathers of these subjects have much in common too. None of the men was involved in the home or in the life of his children. There is little indication that any of the fathers cared about their children.

Carol's father was seldom home during the time he was still married to her mother, and after the divorce Carol saw him rarely and had no close contact with him at all. She has no memories of him in her early life.

Betty's father was a cold and distant man who related to his daughter in much the same manner as he would

relate to any military person subordinate to him. If the performance was adequate there was no complaint. If the performance was not satisfactory, stern judgment was the result. He was frequently away from home for long periods of time and apparently was unable to handle the fact that his first child was a girl.

Nancy's relation to her father is more complex. She suffered greatly at the hands of a sadistic and psychotic stepfather who was drawn to her sexually and who handled his attraction by treating her cruelly. Her fantasies of her biological father were her defense but were poor substitutes for a present father who really cared about her.

Tom never had a father who was any match for his mother, and characteristically, his fathers were passive or absent. Tom never had a strong male with whom to identify or who could control the sexual acting out of the mother. None of his fathers cared enough about Tom to attempt to establish any relationship with him, and he was left to grow up as best he could.

We know very little about Harry's father other than he was successful in business and uninvolved in the home. He too abandoned his son and left him at the mercy of a castrating mother.

Peers: On the basis of the relationships these children experienced in the home, it is not surprising that they all had great difficulties in their relationships with other children. Both Harry and Tom were ostracized by their peer groups throughout their early childhood. Harry was dismissed as a sissy, a feminized boy with whom no one wanted contact. Tom was the rebel, angrily espousing any unpopular cause, and this resulted in alienation of potential friends. Carol was almost totally alone as a child, and although she found great satisfaction in her dancing, she was able to form no close friendships either with her fellow dancing students or with her school peers.

Nancy, too, was a lonely child, set apart from both her family and the other children at school. Once in a while she would find a friend, but the relationship was never a lengthy one and did little to compensate for the terrible feelings of isolation and shame. Betty may have been able to form meaningful and lasting friendships had her family ever allowed her to remain in one school for longer than two years. As it was, she found her friends among the social outcasts of whatever school she was enrolled in at the time, and she lived a beatnik type of existence throughout her childhood years. She was, more than any of the others, seeking out peer relationships and

she was more successful in making friends than any of the others.

For all our subjects, then, childhood was a time of loneliness, unhappiness, failure and continual rejection. Life seemed to promise them little and offer them less.

Today our subjects continue to face the same difficulties that they faced as children. They are lonely, suffering, unhappy people who have not been able to find their places in the world.

Sexual Development: Sexually, all of our subjects are deviate. Harry and Tom are practicing homosexuals, and neither have any aspirations for or interest in heterosexuality. Nancy prefers homosexual contact but finds no sexual experience satisfying. Carol lives a heterosexually oriented life but is incapable of any sustained relationships and finds that whenever she is involved with a man, her life is confusing and upsetting. Betty has had some homosexual experiences and is deeply ashamed of them even as she feels herself drawn to them. She would like to be heterosexual but has never had a relationship with a man that was satisfying.

None of our subjects is married, and only Carol and Betty think they would like to be. Carol wants the security she thinks marriage would bring but is terrified at the prospect of having a child. Betty would like a large

family of children but complains that she has never met a man whom she could seriously consider marrying.

II. SUPERNATURAL RELIGION

Murray distinguishes between supernatural and natural religion, and I adopt this distinction for the purposes of our analysis. By supernatural religion, I refer to religious conceptions that include belief in a supernatural being as he is traditionally viewed in our culture. By natural religion I refer to religious conceptions that exclude a supernatural being.

Involvement in the Church: Three of our subjects, Harry, Tom and Betty, had significant involvement in the church during their childhood. Harry was forced to attend a conservative Sunday School on a regular basis throughout his childhood. His strong feelings of hatred toward this experience may stem from several sources, but his evaluation of this experience is clear: he hated, resented and abhorred it.

Tom, too, was sent to Sunday School regularly, and his parents were involved in the life of the Church. It was a more liberally oriented denomination, and although he lacks the anger that Harry expresses, he remembers nothing of the teachings of the Church and does not attach much importance to his experience there.

Betty, too, was always affiliated with a Sunday School, but unlike Harry and Tom, this involvement was by her own decision and it was a meaningful experience for her. Her parents never forced the issue, and Betty attended because she wanted to. She looks back upon her experience in the Church as being important and meaningful.

Neither Carol or Nancy had any contact with the Church as children. For Carol, it was as if the Church did not exist. No one in her family had the slightest interest, and the subject of religion was totally ignored. Nancy, on the other hand, had a strong interest in religion and looked to it for some help with her many troubles. Her efforts were thwarted, however, by her parents. Her Jewish stepfather would not permit her to approach Christianity, and she felt that she could never embrace her stepfather's religion of Judaism.

Belief in God: Of the three who were exposed to the Church in their youth, none now have a God upon whom they can call. Harry is angry in his rejection of any God, and Betty has come more calmly to the decision that God is a myth which is useful for some people but not for her. Only Tom believes that a God may exist and probably does, but if he does he is a very detached and uninterested entity. If God knows anything at all about Tom personally, he would disapprove of what he knows but would take the

trouble neither to forgive nor to punish.

The two who had no formal religious training as children are hopeful about the question of God's existence but cannot say that he has been very helpful. Nancy appeals to him often for the gift of peace and is still waiting for an answer. Carol believes that there is a God, in a rather naive and childlike manner, only because others seem to believe in him, but she "has never seen him." The question of God's existence for our subjects is primarily an academic issue. To none of them is God an important factor. None has found any comfort or help in prayer.

On the basis of these findings, it would appear that religious belief in God is more related to early relationships with important persons than it is to early exposure to formal religious training. Our subjects look upon "god" with attitudes which are more associated with their opinions of their parents than with the content of religious instruction. The extensive exposure of Tom, Harry and Betty to the Church appears to have had little effect on their present religious belief in regard to the acceptance of a concerned, loving God.

Moreover, it would appear that there is great similarity between each subject's attitude toward "God" and their attitudes toward their fathers. For Tom, God is an

absent, uninterested being -- just as his father was; for Nancy, God is an erotic object beckoning her -- just as her fantasy father was, and at the same time cruelly withholding his love and permitting her terrible suffering -- just as her stepfather did; for Carol, God is someone she "has never seen" but has been told about -- just as her father was; for Betty, God is a myth, a majestic figure that calls forth belief in some but who is basically unreal -- just as her father was.

Only in Harry do we see greater similarity between his attitude toward God and his attitude toward his mother. His anger toward God strikes us as being more similar to his anger toward his mother than it is compared to his disappointment in his father. But, at the same time, we recall that it was Harry who searched for many years for a relationship with God and who became so bitterly disillusioned when his search proved fruitless. This is so similar to his search as a child for a father who could contain the mother and show him the way to manhood that we are still impressed with the similarity in all our subjects between their attitudes toward their fathers and their attitudes toward God.

Their lack of belief in God places our subjects in a minority status in terms of their culture. A recent

sociological survey by Glock and Stark¹ attempts to examine more specifically the Gallop Poll finding that 97 per cent of Americans answer "yes" to the question: "Do you personally believe in God?" The investigators wanted to know what kind of God Americans believe in, and what the similarities and differences were between denominations. In their effort to determine this, they polled 2,326 persons representing ten Protestant denominations and 545 Roman Catholics, asking questions about their religious faith. The first question they asked was: "Which of the following statements comes closest to what you believe about God?"

	Prot.	Cath.
"I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it."	71%	81%
"While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God."	17	13
"I find myself believing in God some of the time but not at other times."	2	1
"I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind."	7	3
"I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out."	1	1
"I don't believe in God."	0	0
No answer	1	1

¹Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, "Is There an American Protestantism?" Transaction III:1 (November-December 1965), 8.

Our non-believing subjects, then, are living in a culture which professes overwhelming belief in some kind of God. We believe that this is a significant factor when we consider the lethality of our subjects. Durkheim indicates that a failure to be integrated into society tends to be related to the phenomenon of suicide. This is not only true of the institutions of society, but the framework of thinking that is characteristic of the society. A person whose system of beliefs is substantially different from the system of beliefs of the society in which he is living, to this extent, stands outside of his society. But the implications of this are not limited to Durkheim's thesis.

If my culture tells me that there is a loving God, and I have been unable to find him in terms of my own personal experience, my sense of abandonment is intensified, and this sense of abandonment, as Litman² has pointed out, is an important factor in suicidal persons.

It is a common finding that an implicit assumption of every child is that whenever anything goes awry in his environment, it is his fault. This, of course, is the result of the omnipotent, magical and narcissistic thinking of every child. Whenever father is angry or mother is rejecting, the assumption of the child is that he has done

²Robert E. Litman, M.D., "Sigmund Freud on Suicide," Essays on Self-Destruction (Not yet published).

something terrible, even though he does not know what it is. A long step toward maturity has been taken when the child begins to realize that the world does not function as a reaction to his secret thoughts, that mother and father can become angry through causes totally apart from his actions and wishes. It is doubtful whether any adult's unconscious processes are entirely free from this childhood assumption.

When the culture then tells the person that God exists and loves him, but he cannot find this to be true in his own personal experience, the assumption is that God is giving his love to everyone else but him, and this must be through some fault of his own. He is not worthy to receive this love of God. There is something about him that is so unlovable that even God cannot accept him. Each of our subjects react to this rejection in his own way: Harry by angrily rejecting God, Carol by feeling orphaned, Betty by intellectualizing, Nancy by despair, and Tom by feeling morally unclean.

When the Church continues to stress that God loves everyone, and these persons are unable to accept this statement as being true for them, the result is that their feelings of being isolated and unworthy are intensified. If God is so good that he loves everyone, and if I can't experience this, if I can't get through to him in my pray-

ers, then there must be something terribly wrong with me. I must be even worse than I had previously thought. There must be some terrible flaw in my character which makes it impossible for even God to love me -- so goes the unconscious reasoning.

What the result would be if these five persons were living in a culture which denied the existence of God is a highly speculative question. It might well be easier for them in that they would only have to contend with the fact that they felt alienated from their culture in other ways, and they would not have to carry the burden that God himself has rejected them. At least we can say this much, that the fact that these five persons do live in a culture that does give tacit belief in the existence of a loving God has not helped them, and this fact may well have added to their burden of shame and abandonment.

Another possibility would be for these five to be completely convinced of their own atheism and be able with certainty to say that the culture is wrong. But to stand against a cultural doctrine and contend that I am right and everyone else is wrong is a difficult task, and one that takes enormous ego strength -- strength which our suicidal persons do not have available to them. They all claim atheistic belief, but the feeling about their atheism is that it is a psychological defense and not a firm commit-

ment. Harry is too angry at his non-existent God for this God to be truly non-existent for him, and the others (Nancy, Carol and Tom) believe that there is a God whose chief characteristic is that he does not care about them.

Nancy knows the agony of suffering at the hands of a father who dotes on his other children but who has rejected her. In a religious sense, all of our subjects know this same agony by living in a culture which tells them that God loves all his children, and they have to add -- "all but me."

We would not want to ignore the possibility that there are many potentially suicidal persons who are not in a state of crisis primarily because of their belief in a loving God. There are many stories such as that of Paul Louis Landsberg³, cited earlier, which indicate that belief in God can be an important anti-suicidal factor, and we must take such accounts just as seriously as we accept the experiences of our own subjects.

The inability of our subjects to find God, or to handle the issue of faith in God in a way that is acceptable to them, appears to be strikingly similar to the difficulty they have in handling their sexuality in an acceptable and satisfying way. The same difficulty is evidenced

³Paul Landsberg, The Experience of Death (London: Rockliff, 1953).

in their attempts to establish satisfactory social relationships, and in their difficulty in establishing a professional identity. In all these areas of life, our subjects drift toward a minority status, out of touch with the mainstream of their culture. They can neither belong, nor can they comfortably stand apart.

Religion: Three of our subjects, Tom, Betty and Carol, see religion as a potentially important part of their lives, and they wish they might understand it better and experience some of the benefits that they believe religious belief holds. Tom is especially expressive about this, believing that people who are members of a religious organization are better able to live and enjoy life. He would like to be a religious person and has not yet stopped his search for the right religion for him.

Betty sees religion as an important way of focusing one's life, and gaining the sense of stability and meaningfulness that she now lacks. Carol is the only one of the five who is now actively attending a Church. The church she has selected stresses positive thinking and the possibility of one's taking control of his own subconscious, an activity in which God can be of some help. It is, however, primarily her task. In selecting this type of religious emphasis, Carol is consistent with the other four who tend to see religion primarily as the assumption of a system of

moral law and demand. Religion is something that one has to do, it is a burden that one carries.

None of the subjects conceives of religion as being a source of strength. The concept of Grace, defined as being God's unmerited favor, is entirely absent in their thinking. Religion is a system of laws which, if a person is able to carry, tends to make life more meaningful. It is an activity for the strong but not for the weak. It is a mark of the good, and the morally bad have no place in it. The task is to first make themselves pure and acceptable and then, on the basis of their proven worthiness, they will have a place in the religious community. The traditional Christian doctrine that God loves us first is entirely alien to them.

Values: This concept of religion is consistent with their feelings about morality. Four of the five -- all but Harry -- feel that it is extremely important for them to live according to some standard of values. All of them are confused about what that standard ought to be. Harry, alone, feels that the whole idea of a standard of values is foolishness, that one should simply seek to get along as comfortably as he can day by day. None of them really feels capable of living up to any satisfactory moral standard. This dilemma is expressed most dramatically by Tom as he talked about the impossibility of living without a

standard and the impossibility of living up to a standard.

If religion is to be considered as a possible help to a suicidal person, consideration of these observations is important. To these five persons, religion is seen in terms of a burden that they do not now have the emotional strength to carry. Furthermore, they tend to see this very weakness as a moral flaw, and this is all the more reason why they cannot affiliate themselves with a religion.

Faith, to them, is a moral task, and doubt is a moral failing. Our subjects were all apologetic in not being able to profess an acceptable religious faith or an acceptable moral standard.

Conclusions: Organized religion has not been able to offer any significant help to these suicidal persons. The very presence of the Church appears to be a threat to them, and they see the Church -- and the God about which the Church preaches -- as being judgmental and excluding. The theological doctrines of Grace, Forgiveness, Love have made no impact upon our subjects and instead serve to intensify their feelings of isolation, unworthiness and helplessness.

III. ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH

Throughout the ages, Christianity has been deeply concerned about the question of death, and although it has

conceived of death in different terms at different periods of history⁴, the Church has always considered death to be of major concern. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has been for centuries considered to be the sine qua non of Christian faith, and the promise of life after death, at least for the faithful, has traditionally been held as one of the pivotal doctrines of Christianity. The importance of this Christian concern with death can be illustrated by the impact it made on Roman culture. Dr. Choron⁵ stresses this point:

What tremendous impression this message (the resurrection) must have made can be realized when we consider that preoccupation with death and fear of it were at their peak. It was a time when in Rome the commerce in pills of immortality was thriving, and mystery rites to cleanse the body and prepare it for transfiguration were a daily occurrence. It is into this troubled and horror-filled world that the news burst that resurrection was actually witnessed. Death, this great terror, was after all not what it appeared to be -- the invincible power, the inescapable fate. It had been conquered -- the dead will rise again.

It was with some surprise, therefore, when we discovered that none of our subjects appeared to consider the subject of death as being related to religion. None of them, not even the three (Harry, Tom and Betty) who have had extensive exposure to the teachings of the Church, can

⁴Jaroslav Pelikan, The Shape of Death (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961).

⁵Jacques Choron, Death and Western Thought (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 85.

ever remember death being discussed either at home or in Sunday School. This is especially surprising when we recall that all three (especially Harry) have had some contact with churches which are theologically conservative, and where we might expect such teaching to be stressed.

Of the five, only Carol professed belief in any kind of after-life, and her conception appeared vague and uncertain. Nancy was unable to decide about life after death, and Tom, Harry and Betty were sure that there is no such thing as immortality, and they passed it off as an issue not really worthy of any serious consideration. I conclude from this that the promise of life after death played little or no part in our subjects' tendency to suicide.

According to the survey conducted by Glock and Stark⁶, most people who identify themselves as being Christian do believe in life after death. In response to the statement, "There is a life beyond death," 65 per cent of the Protestants questioned and 75 per cent of the Catholics stated that this was "completely true," 24 per cent of the Protestants and 16 per cent of the Catholics held that the statement was "probably true." Only 9 per cent of the Protestants and 5 per cent of the Catholics

⁶Glock, "Is There an American Protestantism."

thought that the statement was "probably not or definitely not true." Our five subjects, then, are clearly not representative of modal Christian thinking on the subject of death. They see death in terms of a final end. If they decide to escape life, they do not want to have to face it again after death. What the effect might be of a strong belief in an ideal after-life on a suicidal person is a question that we cannot explore in this study.

None of our subjects wanted to talk about death, although Carol was the only one for whom the subject was upsetting. She avoids the topic as much as she can and confesses great fear of death. She shudders when she thinks about it and steadfastly avoids funerals and everything else she associates with death. Tom, Harry and Betty deny any strong feeling at all about death. To Harry, it is a natural end to life, and neither Betty nor Tom have any thoughts about it except that it is a final end. Betty, however, wonders if perhaps she is not repressing some strong feelings that she is unwilling to face. For Nancy, death is a lover, and it is an experience of peace and an end to suffering.

Analyzing the attitudes of our subjects toward death more carefully, however, in terms of Shneidman's four categories, we come to a more accurate appraisal of what death is to each of them, and what their tendency

toward suicide means to them.

For Harry, death is cessation, and he has no fantasies of any further conscious experience. He feels he will commit suicide when life ceases to provide him with sufficient pleasure to make living worthwhile. He stands like the Epicureans with the "open door" through which he will make his final exit when the pleasures of life cease to exceed the pain.

Nancy, however, has an entirely different meaning. For her death may be termination, but it is not cessation. Death is a state in which she anticipates some pleasure. It is, at the least, a state of perfect peace, but implicitly a peace that she will be able to enjoy. At most, it will be an experience of profound erotic pleasure. She speaks of death in rapture; death is her lover who beckons her to his couch, there to be carressed and cared for. When Nancy speaks of death, she speaks with the manner of a woman recalling an orgasm. It is an ecstatic experience.

Nancy speaks about death as most people would speak about life. She is more curious about death than life, more fascinated with it, more in awe of it. She anticipates fulfillment in death as most expect it in life. Nancy has not despaired of the experiences in which life has denied her, as Harry has. She looks for them in death. Death for Nancy is not cessation even though she

does not profess a formal belief in life after death. It represents a joyful reunion with the lost loving father.⁷

Carol represents still another of Shneidman's classes. Her suicide attempts clearly indicate that she wants Interruption, not cessation or termination. She makes her attempts with the purpose of shutting out the world for a time. She wants to escape temporarily from situations which are causing her stress and unhappiness, but without the desire of cessation. She makes her attempts by taking sleeping pills, gradually increasing the dosage so that she can sleep longer. Sometimes she has slept for several days, then, upon return from the Interruption, she again faces life.

Betty illustrates the fourth of Shneidman's classes of death. Betty is interested primarily in Continuation, but with certain characteristics abated -- namely her homosexuality, her alcohol problem, and her loneliness and feelings of failure. I see Betty as fundamentally life-orientated -- as wanting to continue living -- but without these characteristics which cause her so much pain.

I see Tom, too, in terms of continuation. If he could do away with his feelings of shame and guilt, life

⁷A full discussion of the Harlequin complex is found in "The Harlequin Complex" by David C. McClelland, The Study of Lives, Ed. Robert W. White (New York: Atherton Press, 1963).

would still have meaning for him, and he would embrace it gladly. His main fantasies surrounding his suicide attempts concern his witnessing how sorry certain people would be at his demise. It is as though after death he lives. He has not experienced cessation. His concern is for continuation in a different manner.

The conclusions I draw from this are these. Shneidman's classifications of death are clinically useful. They help point up real and significant distinctions in the clinical study of suicide. A second conclusion is that even though a formal belief in an after-life is denied by our subjects, only one of them are really considering cessation. All appear to want the death experience with the survival of personal consciousness.

IV. NATURAL RELIGION

Gerald Heard⁸ has said that, like the alcoholic, the suicidal person has not really come to grips with his problem when all he has done is survived a crisis. The goal of crisis therapy, Heard feels, ought not to be limited to one of helping the person to remain alive physically. Truly human life is marked by the characteristic of an intense curiosity about the nature of the universe and of life

⁸Heard -- private communication.

itself. Agreeing with this concept, Shneidman⁹ offers the presence of the feeling of awe as being an essential characteristic of the truly alive man. But whether this spirit of life is seen in the quality of curiosity in the sense of awe, or whether it is seen in terms of the active search for universal order and meaning as James has said, it is this spirit of life which has been traditionally a concern of religious thinking. The Saints of the Church, for example, have characteristically stood in awe of a Holy God; the striving of their curiosity has stimulated them in an effort to know God more closely; and they have sought to find the order and meaning of life in terms of his will. God, to his saints, is both a known constant center of life upon which man can build his own existence, and at the same time a mysterious unknown who excites man's curiosity and sense of awe. Thus has Christianity proclaimed a God who is revealed and at the same time hidden in Jesus Christ.

We have seen that our subjects have rejected theism as a meaningful concept or belief. We now want to see what we can discover about their sense of awe, their curiosity, the degree of vitality in their search for the order and meaning of life. We now turn to examine what religious conceptions they do hold.

⁹Shneidman -- private communication.

Religious conception

In an effort to clarify what their religious conceptions are, we have summarized a statement of faith for each of them, couching them in the first person as if the subjects themselves were speaking.

BETTY

There is no God, but man often creates the fiction out of his need to have something constant upon which to build. I have no meaningful constant in my life. There is nothing upon which to root my values, and I am unsure about my values. I am essentially alone and although this is painful to me, I feel that it is good to be able to stand alone.

Each person must make his own place in the world, and the world is neutral. Standing alone, and being a creative person, is a heavy burden, and when I feel like I'm failing in this task, as I usually do, I feel guilty. I must produce and give unceasingly and then, having paid my way, I can perhaps gain pleasure and a place in the universe. There is no forgiveness, I must overcome my mistakes as best I can. The fact that I am not now the kind of person I want to be means that I have failed and I must work harder. But I get very weary of having constantly to give and build my own place in life. The world should not be such a hard place.

CAROL

There is a God, but he is so detached and obscure that I know nothing about him. The ways of the world are unclear and confusing to me. I do not know what is right and wrong, and I live my life the only way I can -- on a day-to-day basis. I look to the outside world to give me guidance on how I should live my life, and often the advice I receive is contradictory. I don't know how much to trust the advice I am given. I do not really know who I am or what my relationship to the world is or ought to be.

I am now searching to find God, to discover the nature of the world, and to define my own place in it. If I could have financial security, I could cope better. As it is, I am very insecure. There is nothing upon which I can depend or trust in.

TOM

There is a God, but he is completely disinterested in me personally. He may be interested in the world as a whole but not in the fate of individuals. The world is a judging, severe place, and I have not found a way to belong. I am not morally good enough to have a place in society. I must earn this, but I am too weak to do so. The world is cold, judging and frightening. There are strong moral demands on me to change, but I am helpless to do so. All would-be helpers judge me and I have found no acceptance in the world.

HARRY

I totally reject the existence of a concerned god, and those who advocate his existence are fools. There is no evidence of this kind of god, but there is much evidence for the fact that there is none. There is, however, a power of nature which has beauty, but it is totally unrelated to my personal struggle.

The world is hypocritical and exploitive. Everyone pretends to be better than they are, and most people will take advantage of you if they have the opportunity. To search after ideals or meaning in life is purposeless, there are none. The best way to live is to find whatever pleasure and contentment is available day by day.

NANCY

If there is a god, it is a god who promises peace after death. The world is cruel, filled with suffering. I can tolerate it only if I can work to alleviate some of the suffering of other people. I suffer for sin that is not my own. Life is a huge demand and it asks more of me than I can give, and this is unjust. If I can make some contribution, I will have some self-respect and will have earned the right to live.

Conceptions of the Universe: For all of our subjects, the universe is a cold, mysterious or hostile place. None of them has succeeded in being able to discover or to create a system of beliefs which would enable him to view the universe as orderly or meaningful. Although most of them see physical law as being constant and dependable, their human problems and troubles are not viewed in any consistent framework. There is nothing in the universe which they can trust to be just, or to reward honest effort or fairly to punish transgression. Morally, the universe is capricious, and they feel themselves to be victims of chance which they cannot control, because there is no control. Most of them think that there must be some order upon which they ought to be able to depend, but none of them has found it. They feel resentful and cheated that the universal order is not more clear and dependable.

Betty is no longer aware of the strong sense of awe that we believe was a strong part of her earlier life. Her sense of curiosity is still alive, but limited, and for the time being her sense of adventure and searching has been postponed. She feels she must first regroup her emotional resources before she can widen her field of life interest.

For Carol, the sense of awe has become a sense of bewilderment. She feels overcome by the immensity and com-

plexity of the universe. She is, however, actively curious about the nature of life, and she pursues her search with all the activity that she can muster.

Tom gives no indication of the sense of awe. He is more frightened than awestruck at the immense and overpowering universe. His sense of curiosity and searching is more active, but he feels he must be very conservative in these dangerous activities.

Harry feels the sense of awe more than any of the others. He sees the Power of the universe which, although impersonal, does provide the world with much that is beautiful. There is, for him, some life force that rolls on in spite of all that man does to pervert it. Harry enjoys nature, and he enjoys the feelings of awe that he experiences when he contemplates it. He sees this natural force, however, as being essentially unknowable, and he has long since stopped searching to learn more about it. He is no longer curious but is content to live each day and allow the world to follow its own mysterious course.

Nancy has turned her sense of awe from the mystery of life to the mystery of death. Her curiosity and the direction of her search are turned to the realm of the dead, and she has almost abandoned life just as she feels life has abandoned her. She wants no more out of life than the opportunity to be of some help to some suffering people,

she wants no more than to tread water while she awaits her final fulfillment in death. But because the nature of death is not sure, she hesitates to kill herself.

Conceptions of Humanity: All of our subjects have negative feelings about humanity, and none has been able to find a satisfying place in the world of man. Betty is the least negative in her evaluation, seeing the world of people as being neutral. There is very little, if any, help available to her, but on the other hand, most people are not out to destroy her. The world is essentially competitive, and everyone has his chance to show what he can do. If the individual can produce, he will be accepted; if he fails, there is no recourse. It is a hard life.

Harry, on the other hand, is convinced that we live in a hostile world. Most people will step on you if they are given a chance, and back-stabbing is a hard and immoral fact of life. The hostility of the world is made even more evil in the fact that most people hide their true natures under a false cloak of piety. There is little fairness in the world, it is a dirty fight.

To Nancy, the world is cruel and heartless. The weak are not even given a fighting chance to defend themselves. Once you begin to slip, the world will take every advantage of you and throw you either into jail or into a prison-like hospital. The underdog has no chance. No one

tries to understand the suffering; everyone is too concerned to defend himself against the part of life that they do not want to see.

For Tom, the world of humanity is a cold and judging world. The judgment is often concealed but is evidenced in a word or a glance. Men usually withhold their true judgmental feelings and prefer to simply stand off from the morally unclean.

Carol sees a bewildering world. People seem to get along with each other, but she does not know how they do it. She tries to learn from her friends, but they too have so many problems that she cannot find any constant, workable way of relating. She is the orphan, watching a three-ring circus, trying to learn the art of the clown and the tightrope walker all at once. The result is confusion.

None of our subjects feels that they are an integrated part of the human situation. They experience few, if any, feelings of warmth or belonging with their fellow men. The world of humanity has its own rules of conduct, and they are excluded from the secret. Their's is a lonely and private existence.

Murray

In his attempt to ascertain the specific qualities

of natural religion, Murray developed fifteen criteria¹⁰ which he felt accurately designated sentiments toward natural religion. We have listed these earlier, but for convenience we list them again here. They are the sentiments toward:

1. self regeneration
2. ideal interpersonal relations
3. the ideal group
4. ideal means to attain ideal ends
5. dedication
6. long-range perspective
7. the potential worth of human beings
8. moral standards
9. self judgment
10. the good of the whole
11. inner spiritual considerations
12. introversion
13. submission to beneficent possession
14. symbolic representations
15. insociation.

As a group, our subjects appeared to have the greatest sentiment toward the areas of moral standards and self judgment. The fact that all the subjects were greatly concerned with moral standards does not indicate that they necessarily had a clear standard of values which they were struggling to adhere to. It does indicate that they considered living up to some standard of values to be of great importance to them. The fact that none of them could articulate his moral standards is a major part of their dilemma. Values are important to them, but they could not be certain of what the values ought to be. It follows that the strong

¹⁰Murray, op. cit.

sentiments toward self judgment reflect strong feelings of guilt and shame, but they could not be specific about just what it was that they were feeling guilty about. The feeling was that they had failed, that they had failed to live up to what was expected of them, and one reason that they had failed was that they were confused and uncertain about what was expected of them. The feelings of frustration and bewilderment were strong.

As a group, the least sentiment was directed toward the area of submission to a beneficent possession. Not only could they not believe in the traditional concept of a loving God, but they could find within themselves no spring of renewal which they could trust. There is no life force which would carry them through when they were tired or discouraged. No good introjects were available to them to feed them or comfort them or affirm them. They appeared to lack the athlete's experience of a second wind which comes to the rescue when all moral strength appears to be exhausted. With no such inner resources from which to draw, they became worn out when external or internal events drew too heavily from their life energy.

Collectively, our subjects were also low on sentiment toward the areas of the ideal group, long-range perspective, and introversion. We now turn to consider each of our subjects individually in terms of Murray's criteria.

Betty showed the strongest sentiment toward self regeneration, dedication and self judgment. She feels that to fulfill her life, she must take total responsibility for her own life and not expect help from anyone. In addition, she must be constantly giving to those around her, and she characteristically surrounds herself with dependent persons for whom she feels responsible. She must be strong, and when life becomes difficult she must deny her feelings of loneliness and inadequacy and prove once again that she is strong enough to make it on her own strength and intelligence. She must keep her own feelings sealed off because inside is a frightened and lonely child, and this child is her enemy. Her lowest sentiments are in the areas of introversion and submission to a beneficent being.

Tom evidenced the greatest sentiment in self judgment. He sees himself as basically an immoral person, and he castigates himself for nearly all of his thoughts and feelings. He knows that he feels guilty about his homosexuality and his infractions of the law, but he is also aware that his feelings of shame and guilt transcend these departures from society's moral code. He is frightened of any strong emotions, including those of love and enthusiasm. His normal assumption, upon meeting people, is that they are judging him and finding him at fault. Like most of the

other subjects, his lowest sentiment is toward submission to a beneficent possession.

There is another side to Tom, however, one that we have never seen first-hand but which has been documented. This is the nighttime Tom, the unshaven, drunken, angry man who moves in the shadowy world of the homosexual. Here is the "Mr. Hyde" from whom violent emotions flow uncontrolled. Here is the converse side of the quiet, proper timid man who works diligently by day. The Tom that we interviewed is abandoned by night and presents an entirely different picture. What the conceptions of natural religion might be that this "other Tom" holds we cannot say, but evidently there is little of the timid, shameful man that we know.

Nancy's sentiments run high in the areas of ideal interpersonal relationships, dedication, and the potential worth of human beings, inner spiritual considerations, introversion and symbolic representations. We consider her our most religious subject as measured according to Murray's criteria. Interestingly, she also appears to us to be the most lethal. For Nancy, death would be a religious experience. Her lowest sentiment is in the area of self regeneration.

Harry's whole range of religious sentiments was low, reflecting our earlier observation that he had already

given upon his religious quest. Neither life nor death have much meaning for him. Had we known Harry thirty years ago, our speculation is that he might have been one of the most religious of our subjects. His life history indicates a deep concern for some meaningful, religious conception of life, but having failed to find one he has now given up the search entirely. He will continue to live as long as life is passably pleasant, but like the Epicureans, death is always the "open door" -- the final exit from a life which has ceased to be sufficiently pleasant.

Carol's highest sentiment is in the area of moral standards. Although these are very important to her, she is confused about what her standards are. She was lowest in the area of sentiment toward dedication, long-range perspective and introversion. Carol simply wants to know how social relationships are created and conducted. If she can create a social situation in which there is the least possible stress and the greatest possible satisfaction and sense of belonging, she will continue to live and not be concerned about the search for a larger meaning.

Tillich

We have seen that all of our subjects have seriously considered suicide as a means of handling the life stresses which they face and which they feel they cannot handle

in any other way. They do not feel adequate to the task of coping with life as it presents itself to them. They do not have the inner resources, they feel, to tolerate the stresses of existence and so they contemplate suicide.

But, as we have seen, it is a non-existence with qualification. Only Harry appears to accept cessation as the result of suicide, and the very fact that he called the Suicide Prevention Center before jumping off his high building indicates how he wanted to avoid this final step if possible. He, like all suicides, was ambivalent about wanting to kill himself.

The question of "to be or not to be" is a question basic to human existence and is broader in scope than the question of suicide. Tillich¹¹ has pointed out that the threat of non-being permeates being and is an inescapable part of it. This threat of non-being is "the first assertion about the nature of anxiety."¹² Tillich defines anxiety as being "the existential awareness of non-being."¹³ Anxiety is finitude, according to Tillich; it is the awareness that not only one day we must die but that even as we live, we are limited:¹⁴

¹¹Paul Tillich, Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

¹²Ibid., p. 35. ¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

This is the natural anxiety of man as man, and in some way of all living beings. It is the anxiety of non-being, the awareness of one's finitude as finitude.

All of our subjects are highly aware of their own finitude, and they are painfully aware that they are severely limited in their ability to control or cope with life.

This condition, according to Tillich, is not unique to suicidal persons. The anxiety is a human anxiety and one in which we all participate. Why, then, do these five persons turn to suicide as a way of dealing with this human anxiety? Can we discover, in terms of Tillich's analysis of this threat of non-being, certain elements which these persons have in common which leads them to seriously consider suicide as a way of dealing with the threat of non-being. In our effort to determine this, we must first understand Tillich's position more completely.

Tillich distinguishes three types of anxiety according to the three directions in which non-being threatens him.¹⁵ Each of the three has a relative and an absolute dimension. The three classifications are Ontic Anxiety, Spiritual Anxiety and Moral Anxiety. Ontic Anxiety threatens man's self affirmation relatively in terms of fate and absolutely in terms of death. Spiritual anxiety

¹⁵Ibid., p. 41.

threatens man's being relatively in terms of emptiness and absolutely in terms of meaninglessness. Moral anxiety threatens man's being relatively in terms of guilt and absolutely in terms of condemnation. These are the unavoidable anxieties of man, and we find our own ways of coping with them.

When we accept these threats to our being as part of our being, we suffer from them, but they do not limit us; by accepting our own realistic limitations we are, in fact, affirming our existence as it is. The willingness of a person to accept these anxieties as being his own is what Tillich means by "courage." The courage to be means bravely to take on to ourselves the existential fact of our finitude, to see ourselves as we are: persons involved in being, constantly threatened by non-being.

However, when we are unable -- or unwilling -- to accept these anxieties as being part of our very existence, when we seek to escape from the burden of anxiety, the result is a distorted and unrealistic life. We then attempt to live on the basis of the fantasy of what we think we would like life to be instead of living life as it in fact is.

Tillich describes the type of life that results from a denial of the threat of non-being in each of the classifications. Inability to accept Ontic Anxiety -- the

anxiety about fate and death -- "impels toward a security which is comparable to the security of a prison . . . He who lives in this prison is unable to leave the security given to him by his self-imposed limitations."¹⁶ The person then tends to fear what is not to be feared and to feel safe in situations that realistically call for fear. His inability to accept realistic ontic anxiety produces fears that have no basis in reality and blinds him to true dangers. The person who is able to accept ontic anxiety pursues realistic striving for security, and he is able to take reasonable steps to avoid real danger. Acceptance of ontic anxiety has enabled man to survive in the real world where realistic dealings with fate and death are indispensable to his survival.

In like manner, acceptance of moral anxiety will normally lead a person to adopt moral self-discipline and value systems which are realistically based and strive to minimize feelings of guilt. Refusal of the person to accept the burden of this responsibility results in his inability to take any action and leads him to refuse responsibility for decisions that he is forced to make. He may become highly moralistic -- imposing a stern, rigid legalism on himself and others -- or psychopathic refusing

¹⁶Ibid., p. 75.

to submit to any rules of behavior. Either extreme represents a refusal to accept responsibility for his own moral behavior. He then may be plagued by unrealistic guilt feeling and suffer the inability to function morally and spontaneously.

In regard to Spritual Anxiety, the refusal of the person to carry upon himself the persistent doubts of the meaning and purpose of his existence drives him to "the creation of certitude in systems of meaning, which are supported by tradition and authority . . . [it] builds a narrow castle of certitude which can be defended and is defended with utmost tenacity."¹⁷ He clings to his fictional structure in a rigid and unyielding way and no longer has the ability to doubt what is doubtful. He then tends to doubt what is not doubtful, and an air of suspicion pervades his life. His ability to trust is seriously impaired, and neither his certainty or his uncertainty is realistically oriented.

Tillich stresses that all three areas of anxiety are common to all men but that usually one set predominates. During the Puritan times, for example, Moral Anxiety seemed to be stressed; in our own time, Tillich holds, Spiritual Anxiety seems to be most in issue.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 76.

Of the three anxieties, as Tillich formulates them, the Ontic Anxiety would seem on the surface to be predominant with persons who are seriously considering suicide. It is true that suicide is sometimes seen as a counter-phobic phenomenon, a way of handling death fears. But Tillich observes that although suicidal behavior "can liberate one from the anxiety of fate and death . . . it cannot liberate one from the anxiety of guilt and condemnation."¹⁸

The Church has traditionally counted on this Moral Anxiety as an effective anti-suicidal influence. By denouncing suicide as being sinful, it relies on increasing the moral anxiety to the point where the person does not accept suicide as a means of handling his anxiety:¹⁹

The experience, therefore, that suicide is no way of escaping guilt must be understood in terms of the qualitative character of the moral demand and of the qualitative character of its rejection. Guilt and condemnation are qualitatively, not quantitatively, infinite. They have an infinite weight and cannot be removed by a finite act of ontic self-negation.

Anxiety

With this summary of Tillich's analysis, we are now ready to look again at our five suicidal persons, this time from the viewpoint of the human anxieties of fate and death, emptiness and meaninglessness, guilt and condemna-

¹⁸Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 56.

tion.

Ontic Anxiety: All of our subjects exhibit great ontic anxiety, but the anxiety appears more in the relative terms of fate than in the absolute terms of death. They tend to look to death as the escape from the anxiety that they must face if they are to continue living and accepting the uncertainty of their own fate.

Carol attempts to escape from the anxiety of fate by making periodic impulsive suicidal attempts which serve the purpose of interrupting her flow of life and giving her temporary relief from the anxiety of fate. She is blind to the danger of such behavior, and although everyone around her reacts with fear at each attempt, she herself appears unaware -- emotionally -- of the realistic danger she faces. Such blindness, as Tillich points out, is typical of a pathological reaction to anxiety. Recently, since the research was conducted, things are going well for Carol. Her reaction to this is also a denial. When things do go well for her, she assumes that she has passed her problems and that she can now live life without anxiety and without problems. When things start to go badly, her ontic anxiety floods her and she is unable to handle it. She seeks escape in another attempt. Her inability to accept day-to-day anxiety as an inevitable part of living results in the extremes of total denial and dangerous interruption.

Harry handles his ontic anxiety by limiting his life to a day-to-day basis. He makes no long-range plans and permits himself no daydreams of future pleasures. He thus does not have to face the human anxiety of formulating plans that may or may not materialize. With no goals, he need not face any failures, and he is spared the feelings that attend failure or the possibility of failure. The price he pays for this self-imposed limitation is, of course, forfeiture of the pleasure of worked for success. When the balance of day-to-day pleasure-pain ratio again hits a negative level, he will deny this anxiety by rejecting life totally in suicide. Keeping the "open door" always at hand, and maintaining himself in his narrow prison, he escapes ontic anxiety and loses deeply felt pleasure.

Betty too has found it necessary to severely limit her goals in life and now concentrates almost exclusively on immediate problems. Earlier in her life she was capable of accepting some degree of ontic anxiety as she sought to confront her fate realistically and plan her life. When she suffered the final rejection from her family, she lost this important support and her life began to appear to be frightening to her. The anxiety surrounding the question of what was to become of her became so intense that she felt she could not handle it. She lost her ability to plan

for the future and began to limit her concern, concentrating on day-to-day survival. She could not see where she was going and seldom could bear to consider where she might be a year from now or five years from now. The future was ominous and dark, and her fate was mysterious and frightening. When she lost her job, the anxiety became too much and the temptation to deny the struggle through suicide became strong. Betty was different from Carol in that she maintained her ability to become frightened at the possibility of killing herself. She was able to accept this realistic fear, take responsibility for it and seek help. Betty feels greater anxiety than either Harry or Carol, and this ability to take on the anxiety makes her less a suicidal threat than either of the others. She is not, however, entirely free from the temptation to deny anxiety. She frequently misjudges the danger of the situations she faces and, as a consequence, suffers frequent minor mishaps. She is accident-prone and at times feels paralyzed and unable to control her fate. Things happen to her in an unpredictable way. Fate is capricious and usually unkind. As yet, she is unable to accept the anxiety that accompanies the responsibilities of being master of her own fate.

Tom clings to the pattern of living with which he is familiar, even though it is unacceptable to him in so many

ways. To make a determined effort to change his way of living means to accept the anxiety that must always accompany the abandoning of the old and familiar and embracing the new and strange. His inability to accept this anxiety as part of his being means that he must maintain himself in his prison of familiar behavior. Just as he denies the relative ontic anxiety of his fate, so he denies the ultimate ontic anxiety of death. He is frequently out of touch with his fear of death and so approaches cessation in suicidal ways. His need to be periodically put in a real prison is graphic demonstration of his need to imprison himself emotionally as he denies the anxiety of accepting full responsibility for his own fate.

Nancy has devised many ways of escaping the ontic anxiety. She flies to dope, alcohol, prison, and her garage when fate seems too much for her. Sometimes she curls up in her mother's lap in a regression that says that she must have someone take care of her when her ontic anxiety builds up to a point that she cannot take care of herself. Death to Nancy is a blissful state, the final escape from ontic anxiety. Here she envisions an existence in which there is no anxiety, only a perfect peace where she need take no responsibility for her own life. Instead of seeing death as the ultimate negation of her being, she perceived it instead as being the final rest. Yet we see

in Nancy a courage which we respect. One cannot help but wonder why she does not kill herself. We wonder how she can continually come back to accept the anxieties which she feels so intensely. For Nancy, the alternative of a limited life seems not to be a possibility. She does not close down or build the kind of prison that Tom has constructed. She seems to remain open to the anxieties of life. She appears to say that she will either live life fully or abandon it entirely, but she will not compromise with it. She will feel the misery and the joy, or she will run from it, but she will not limit it. She is aware of the danger of her situation. Just as it is easy to see Nancy killing herself, it is difficult to see her as an unfeeling person who defends himself against ontic anxiety by limiting her perceptions and her capacity for feeling.

Spiritual Anxiety: According to Tillich, Spiritual Anxiety threatens man's being relatively in terms of emptiness and absolutely in terms of meaninglessness. None of our subjects can be said to be experiencing full or meaningful lives, but they have varying degrees of acceptance of this anxiety.

Harry must deny all spiritual anxiety. He becomes genuinely puzzled when asked to talk about meaning or purposefulness in life. He has not committed his life to any cause or to any other person. He tolerates life

and seldom, if ever, can be said to enjoy it. His one time search for religious meaning has failed, and now he must deny the issue entirely. Only a fool continues to search for a meaningful life when life is not meaningful. Last year his life was centered around alcohol, and when this ran out the only alternative he could see was suicide. This year his life is centered around his work which is the management of a cheap, understaffed hotel. He works there twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The hotel is both his life and his prison. He deals with his spiritual emptiness by covering it with constant work; he denies the essential meaninglessness of his life by keeping constantly active. This is a better adjustment than the bottle, but at the same time it is a denial of his spiritual anxiety.

Carol feels the emptiness of her life and seeks to fill the void through social contact. If she can be dating the right man, and dating often enough, the anxiety of her emptiness appears to be gone -- at least for the time being. Carol never talks in terms of a purpose or of a meaning to life. Commitment is to her an alien concept and she has never considered commitment to a cause or a person as a human possibility.

She is the only one of our subjects who is now attending any kind of church. But church for Carol does not serve the purpose of putting her in touch with God or

with herself. She accepts it as a pragmatic and external device whereby she can learn to function more efficiently socially. The rules of thinking she learns there serve the purpose of denying the issue of spiritual anxiety. Her "religious" teaching serves the end of avoiding feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness and in this way are repressive. As long as her external life is busy enough, her internal life need never be faced, and the anxiety is thereby avoided.

Carol gives the impression of being shallow. She is like a pretty Dresden doll who aspires to be little more than an acceptable ornament. She makes herself available for the boys to play with and, although she resents being put back on the shelf when the play time is over, she wants nothing more than to be used for amusement soon again. This is the limitation that she has placed on herself to avoid the spiritual anxiety. The price that she pays for this is being, as one therapist described her, hollow. It is as if inside the pretty exterior, there is nothing but emptiness, an emptiness that she dare not face. Murray described this effect at length.²⁰

Tom looks enviously at people who he believes have found meaning in their lives and have learned to contend

²⁰Murray, Essays in Self Destruction,

with the emptiness that they feel. He thinks he would like to commit himself to something but cannot find a cause that stirs him. He feels empty, and he feels that his life is meaningless. He, like Harry, seeks to fill the void through homosexual activity and alcohol. But he, like Harry, has found that this is no answer.

Tom is drawn to the church as if he senses that his answer lies here someplace, but he can never really enter in to find out. Tom can feel his spiritual anxiety up to a point, but then it becomes too painful, his courage fails him, and he turns to some deviate behavior as if to prove to himself that he really does exist. Spiritual anxiety, like all of Tillich's anxieties, is fundamentally an anxiety of non-being. To accept the painful feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness as a part of one's existence takes courage. Tom clings to his negative identity -- his identity as a deviate -- rather than face the danger that he may be empty. Society has strong feelings toward the deviate. It pays some attention to them, and by drawing these feelings and this attention, Tom receives an inverse kind of affirmation of his being. If he were not identifiable as a deviate, he fears he may be a nothing, and this is intolerable.

Tom has received an enormous amount of attention from interested psychologists and other researchers. Al-

though one goal of such attention is to help him change, we have seen the possibility that such attention may be interpreted by him as reinforcement of his negative identity.

It is as if Tom were saying:

I am not empty, I am a homosexual; my life is not meaningless. I fill the role of a deviate. I supply a deviate meaning to society, and therein find that I do, in fact, exist. My shame is testimony to my existence.

Nancy directly confronts her spiritual anxiety, just as she directly confronts her ontic anxiety, until the pressure is too intense and then she flees to her escapades of dope and alcohol. She is intensely aware of the emptiness within her and assumes this is her anxiety to bear. She responds to her sense of meaninglessness by desperately attempting to find a meaning for her life. If she can get through college and become trained to help other suffering people, she will have found a meaning; if she fails in this, her life will be meaningless and a meaningless life is not worth living -- and she will kill herself: so goes her reasoning.

Nancy again exhibits a courage to accept the anxiety and uses it to find creative expression. When courage fails, and the anxiety becomes too great, she escapes. How the balance will eventually fall, we cannot tell. Again, for Nancy we feel that there will be no compromise; the

struggle will either be a success or a failure, nothing in between.

Moral Anxiety: For Tillich, man is also threatened relatively in terms of guilt and absolutely in terms of condemnation.

In Harry's life, moral anxiety appears to be no issue at all. He claims to feel no guilt about his homosexuality, and although he sees his alcoholism as being stupid, he admits to no guilt about it. Suicide for him is no moral issue either.

Harry considers himself more honest than most, hard-working and dependable. He helps people when he conveniently can and handles the employees of the hotel gently and with respect. He feels no moral flaw within himself. He feels that his murderous feelings are fully justified by reality, and even if he would kill someone, the person would deserve it, and the world would be better off.

Yet Harry cannot simply be classified as a psychopath. He does feel a strong sense of obligation to do any job well that he takes on. He handles his job responsibilities seriously and effectively. Furthermore, he does not appear to be out to "con" people. He is likely to give more in a relationship than he takes. He remains genuinely loyal and grateful to his therapist at the SPC.

What appears to me is that Harry has projected his

self judgment and his guilt onto God. He finds God as being very unjust and as not living up to his promises which he has issued through the church. If there is any guilt in the world, the guilt belongs to God, not to Harry. Not only is God guilty, but God has been condemned to annihilation. Harry has killed him; God no longer exists.

In this sense, we can say that Harry is the true Christian. God has died for the guilt that Harry might otherwise have felt. God has taken upon himself (as in the traditional concept of the crucifixion) the sins of man and has suffered the only punishment that can be inflicted (the wages of sin are death). The debt having been paid, Harry is left a redeemed man, no longer accountable for his guilt.

It is this apparent absence of guilt feeling in Harry that may have been a strong factor that saved him from suicide. Whatever other troubles he may have struggled with, the sense of guilt appears not to have been one of them. He may have been saved by allowing God to die for him.

The element that is missing in this view of Harry as the Christian is the concept of the resurrection. As a result, Harry is left with a sense of abandonment, and this makes him suicidally dangerous.

The sense of abandonment that he felt at his mother's death, and the disappearance of the money she left him (it took him a year to drink it up), and his feeling that God is dead leaves him a lonely and unrelated person. When he was able to find a meaningful relationship with his therapist at the SPC, the sense of abandonment was lessened and he quickly recovered and returned to his life. If he had not been able to dispose of his guilt feelings as he did, we wonder if he might not have killed himself. The lack of the guilt was certainly helpful. If it is true that Harry succeeded in projecting his guilt on God, who then died, it is rather a remarkable reenactment of the traditional view of the redeeming work of Christ on the cross.

Carol has only the slightest awareness of moral anxiety. She has some guilt feelings at times, but these are not intense and do not last long. At times she feels like she has been condemned, but not so much from any moral or immoral activity of her own. It is always an unjust condemnation, and she attributes it to the fact that her father never showed any interest in her and her mother too was uninterested. The fault is theirs' for not taking more of an active interest in their child and teaching her what life is all about.

Carol's goals in life are to marry a rich man and

thus gain both social and financial security. These goals are satisfactory to her. She feels that she is entitled to this much out of life. She has been cheated from the beginning and now she deserves better. She evaluates her behavior not in terms of what is right and wrong, but in terms of what is effective and what is not effective. She is a "practical person", pure and simple, and takes no responsibility for moral direction.

Betty is quite different from either Carol or Harry. Betty feels strong moral anxiety, but in relative terms of guilt, and in absolute terms of condemnation. The fact that her life is not turning out as well as she had expected she interprets as meaning that she has failed in a moral sense. She is guilty of weakness, and this is an unforgivable sin for which there can only be condemnation.

Life is a task that must be met with strong moral strength, and those who fail are testifying to their own moral flaws. Betty's sense of guilt is a major factor in her suicidal potentiality. Her sense of morality prohibits her from seeking or asking for help, and this makes a therapeutic relationship difficult. She is betraying her superego by accepting therapy, and it was only when she felt totally condemned to the point where she was going to have to die that she was able to overcome this prohibition.

Tom also has strong moral anxiety. He is keenly

aware of feelings of guilt, not only for his homosexuality and his illegal activity, but also for feeling emotions. Every emotion he feels appears to be a threat to his existence. If they become too strong, he will be condemned, and this is a fate that he fears. So strongly does Tom repress his feelings that they are seldom in evidence. His appearance is that of a wooden man who has no strong feelings. He is rigid and brittle and would prefer to avoid close contact. The condemnation he feels will not come from God, who is not that interested in him, but from all people with whom he has contact. The punishment that he fears is a condemnation of his very being, and he feels that in order to survive he must at all costs keep these dangerous feelings hidden even from himself. He is aware only of the guilt. He feels that he cannot accept the terrible anxiety which would follow an open expression of any feeling.

Nancy is very much in touch with this anxiety of non-being. Like Tom, her guilt centers not so much around her homosexuality or her addiction. Instead she feels guilty and condemned for what she is -- not for what she does. It is wrong for her to be alive. She does not have the problem that Tom has of having to hide her emotions; they flow through her words, her actions, and her poetry. Her great immoral act is just that of living; she is alive,

and for that she is condemned.

Betty would like the courage to fully face her spiritual anxiety; it is an important issue for her. She feels deeply the emptiness of her life and is concerned with a sense of meaningfulness. She knows that she cannot really be satisfied until she has committed herself to a cause or a person. Her present handling of this anxiety is to surround herself with dependent persons with whom she forms symbiotic relationships. This serves, for her, the temporary purpose of making her feel needed and wanted. Her feelings of emptiness are less severe, and she feels a sense of meaning in her life. These relationships for Betty are false answers to a real need. She soon becomes irritated at the objects of her concern and becomes aware that they do not really fill the need she experiences to become a full and meaningful person. These dependent people are for her a way of avoiding the acceptance of the full impact of the spiritual anxiety which she feels. But the avoidance of this anxiety is far from complete. Betty exhibits considerable courage and ambivalence in being able to accept the anxiety that she feels. It is difficult for her to abstain from the stop-gap curtailment of her anxious feelings in the hope of accepting the anxiety as part of her being and looking for a more satisfactory cause or purpose to espouse.

Betty feels a need for commitment. She may find the opportunity in marriage or in some profession, but as of now she takes on dependent people the way some take aspirin -- to avoid a pain that may have deeper implications than they now want to face.

Conclusion: Tillich makes the point that all men have to deal with all three sets of the anxieties of non-being, but at different times different anxieties are predominant. We wondered if we could find one set of Tillich's anxieties that seemed to be more important for our subjects than the others.

A study of the analysis presented here pointed up the difficulty of drawing such a conclusion. We found that the three sets were all strongly represented in each of our subjects.

Our impression, however, is that Carol and Harry were most strongly involved in ontic anxiety -- the anxiety of fate and death. Their concern over their own fate seemed to govern their lives.

Betty and Tom seemed clearly most anxious over the moral question. Both have a strong sense of the guilt and condemnation for some moral failure.

Nancy appeared to us to be open to and suffering from all the anxieties of non-being. We could not really say that any one predominated.

The one set which did not appear to play the predominant role in any of our subjects was that of spiritual anxiety -- anxiety over emptiness and meaninglessness. This is not to say that this was not an important part of each subject's stress, but it did appear to be less vital to them. In view of Tillich's observation that this is the major area of stress in our time, this is a surprising finding. Perhaps we face this anxiety only when we have been able to come to some terms with the other two. Perhaps the question of life's meaning only comes into focus when we have been able to accept a certain amount of anxiety about our own fate, and our own sense of guilt.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

On the basis of this study, the following conclusions are drawn concerning the religiosity of these suicidal persons.

1. The effect of early family interaction appears to have a far greater effect on the religious conceptions of these subjects than any formal religious training to which our subjects had been exposed. Religious education and formal emphasis on the loving and helpful nature of God, for example, had negligible effect when the child was not experiencing loving and helpful parents.

2. The attitudes which the subjects expressed toward God are very similar to the attitudes which they express toward their fathers. I consider it highly probable that the child's early experience with his father determines to a significant extent his later attitude toward God.

3. The fact that none of our subject's mothers wanted their children appears to be a strong factor both in their suicidal behavior and in their religious conceptions. Their awareness of not being wanted appears related to their difficulty in establishing a trustful

relationship to the world.

4. The failure of suicidal persons in their ability to establish meaningful and lasting peer relationships has since Durkheim been recognized as being an important factor in the suicidal personality. This study confirms this finding. This characteristic interfered significantly with our subject's possible involvement in the religious community.

5. The subjects in this study saw religion as a potentially helpful resource, but the precise nature of the help which religion represented to them is vague. The hope was usually for some kind of magical intervention.

6. There is little consistency in these suicidal persons' attitude toward death, except that they do not conceive of death as being total cessation.

7. The suicidal persons studied here see the universe as a cold, mysterious, impersonal and lonely place.

8. The concept of a "beneficent possession" is an unfamiliar and alien concept to these suicidal persons.

9. The suicidal persons studied here evidence little capacity to formulate long range plans or long range hopes. Their needs are conceived in terms of immediate gratification. The demands which they make on religion is in accordance with this characteristic, and they tend to become discouraged if religious resources cannot produce

the immediate and dramatic help they ask of it.

10. The analysis of the subjects in terms of Tillich's three sets of existential anxieties showed no significant results.

11. The suicidal persons studied here appear to be strongly self judging, and have extreme difficulty in tempering this judgment with external criteria such as a religious moral code might offer.

12. Forgiveness is an alien concept for these suicidal persons. They find it difficult both to forgive and to accept forgiveness.

13. The suicidal persons in this study have little concept of a consistent, supportive, "unseen order" in Life.

14. The subjects of this study have little concern for abstractions, and they show a limited ability to abstract. They tend to be concrete and specific in their thinking. Insofar as philosophy or theology offer general principles, these disciplines tend to be meaningless to our subjects.

15. None of our subjects found prayer to be useful.

16. None of these suicidal persons have a clear concept of a meaning or purpose for his life. But the need for such a meaning or purpose is strongly felt. All of these subjects would like to feel that their lives had some

meaning.

17. Symbolic actions or objects, such as the sacraments or objects of art, have little meaning for these persons.

18. The suicidal persons studied here express the feeling that Life has no intrinsic value. Life is only worthwhile to the extent that it is pleasurable.

Because of the limitations inherent in the nature and method of this study, these findings can claim no statistical validity. They represent the commonality found in the specific persons studied, and the extent to which they may hold true for suicidal persons in general is untested.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION AND SUICIDE

RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

In spite of the interest that some religious groups and some individual clergymen have shown in suicide prevention¹, most of the research, training and clinical work in this field has been carried on by groups and individuals who are not identified with religious institutions. The Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles is an illustration of the best that psychiatry, psychology and social work have to offer in this field. Yet the fact that these scientific disciplines are making such important contributions in the area of suicide research and prevention does not mean that religion has no responsibility in this area, nor does it mean that religion is without a unique contribution that it can make.

¹Some of the existing centers in which clergymen play an active role in this country include: The Suicide Prevention Center of San Francisco, Rev. Bernard Mayes; The Contra Costa Suicide Prevention Service, California. Staffed by thirty-one clergymen; Rescue, Inc., Boston, Mass., Rev. Kenneth Murphy; The Suicide Prevention Service of Portland, Oregon, Rev. James Wade; The Suicide Prevention Service of Greater Chattanooga, Tenn., Rev. Donald R. Faube; National Save-a-Life League of New York, Rev. Harry M. Warren; The Peoples Church of Chicago, Rev. Virgil A. Kraft; Central Church of Chicago, Dr. Kenneth Hildebrand.

Historically, religion has seen the problem of suicide as part of its province of concern, because religion professes deep concern with the spiritual development of persons, and when a person is suicidal he is in a spiritual crisis of the gravest proportions. Psychology has discovered that some of the factors involved in a suicidal crisis are feelings of guilt, abandonment, anger and hopelessness. These are some of the feelings that religion has traditionally felt called to respond to.

The suicidal act is a "cry for help." It has been described as a cry directed to the significant other persons in the suicides life sphere. But it can also be seen as a cry of spiritual desparation -- a cry to God.

The theological meaning of suicide has been almost totally ignored in theoretical writings of the past. But when a person says by word or act that he prefers death to life, it is a situation that carries grave theological implications, and at the same time offers a challenge to religion to seek to understand more clearly what the ministry to such persons ought to be.

If religion is serious in its mission to seek out and save the lost, it cannot ignore the suicidal person who represents the extreme feeling of spiritual abandonment. It cannot fail to accept the challenge to enter the dark forbidding world of the person seeking his own death.

This is a valley where the shadow is dark and frightening indeed, but if the major religious institutions of our culture are to be true to the beliefs they profess, they must not avoid the path that leads through such dangerous territory.

In addition to having the responsibility to understand suicide and to minister to the suicidal person, organized religion has some unique opportunities to work effectively in the field of suicide prevention.

The NIMH report on Mental Health² indicates that more people initially take their emotional problems to clergymen than to any other single professional group. This places the clergyman in a key position to detect possible suicidal danger.

In addition to his contact with those who are actively seeking help, the clergyman has frequent contacts with many persons who are troubled but who have not as yet sought assistance with their problems. In his day to day calling and in his dealing with the members of his parish and his community, he has the opportunity to keep in touch with many different home situations. Most persons who make a suicide attempt have attempted to communicate their intention to do so, although often the threat is veiled and

²Action For Mental Health (New York: Basic Books, 1961).

disguised. If a clergyman is trained to read the signs, and to interpret the communication that the suicidal person is attempting to make, he can often intervene in time to avert a crisis and possibly a tragedy. Suicidal situations are frequently found to have developed in families where communication is hindered and distorted, and the clergyman is often in a strong position to help the family deal more creatively with their problems.

A third opportunity which the clergyman has is found in his frequent involvement in a family which is undergoing a crisis. It is common for the clergyman to be called into stressful situations, such as that of death in the family or serious illness, and it is appropriate for him to take the initiative in offering his services in these circumstances. Especially in times of loss or impending loss -- times which may trigger suicidal impulses -- the clergyman is often in the best position to offer life saving aid.

Finally, the representative of the religious community is often in close touch with his community's social and political structure, and can speak with some influence. He can use this influence to guide his community in providing professional crisis facilities as they are needed.

These are some of the ways in which organized religion can carry its responsibility and its ministry to the suicidal person. How religion itself may be a resource to

the suicidal person must now be discussed.

RELIGION AS A RESPONSE

In the discussion of dealing with a suicidal person from the viewpoint of religion, an important distinction must first be established. When the person is in the midst of his crisis, the response which religion can make will be different from that which it may make after the immediate crisis is past.

In time of crisis

During the crisis itself, "the principle factors are the overwhelming importance of an intolerable problem and the feelings of hopelessness and helplessness."³ The technique of handling the suicidal person in crisis has been developed by the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center, and has been organized in six phases. These phases are not necessarily accomplished in this order, but all need to be dealt with.

1. The helper must attempt to establish a relationship with the suicidal person, if there is no pre-existent relationship. The relationship ideally should be one of mutual trust and respect, and be characterized by a free flow of feelings and information. It is important that contact with the suicidal person be maintained as long as

³"Manual For Clinical Associates," Suicide Prevention Center, Unpublished Manuscript, 1965.

is necessary.

2. The focal problem should be identified and clarified. Frequently the suicidal person is confused and disorganized. He is experiencing chaotic feelings, and may have great difficulty in defining precisely what the problem is. Often, once the problem has been identified, the patient experiences a feeling of relief, and is able to place his life in better perspective.

3. The helper will try to evaluate the suicidal danger which the patient represents, so that he will best be able to help him.

4. In addition to defining and nature and the seriousness of the problem, the helper will attempt to assess the persons strengths and resources. The suicidal person often feels as though he has no assets upon which he can draw. Careful examination of his situation often reveals resources which he had not thought of, and which can make an important difference to him.

5. All the patients resources, both within his own personality and those external to himself, should be mobilized. The helper should encourage the patient to do everything he can for himself, and be willing to help with what the patient cannot do for himself.

6. Some therapeutic plan must be developed and implemented. The plan may include hospitalization, psychotherapy, family counseling, or whatever else seems appro-

priate and helpful. Whatever the plan, a suicidal crisis calls for action of some sort, and the helper accepts the responsibility to aid in its conception and implementation.

The main purpose in dealing with the person in a suicidal crisis is to keep him alive, and to take whatever action that is appropriate to protect the person from himself. The helper representing the religious community will act in much the same way as any other helping individual who has become aware of the crisis. The principles developed by the Suicide Prevention Center are as appropriate to one helper as to another, and there is no unique contribution that a religionist can make except as he has prepared himself to deal with this kind of crisis.

In post crisis time

Once the crisis has passed, however, and the immediate danger of suicide has somewhat lessened, once the flood of feelings has abated to the point where they are more manageable, the role of the helper can change from one of crisis intervention to one of helping the person to reestablish his life. Just as the human problem of the alcoholic is not solved when he recovers from a binge, so the human problem of the suicidal person is not solved when the immediate crisis is survived. Persons who have survived one suicide attempt are likely to attempt it

again at a later time unless some significant change is effected. Of what benefit can religion be to affect the person to such an extent that he can be saved from a subsequent suicidal crisis?

Four of our five subjects were raised with some significant contact with institutional religion, yet this exposure did not save them from being dangerously suicidal; nor did any of them move closer to their historic religious faith as a resource in their crisis. This would suggest that either religion is not important as a deterrent to suicide, or that the nature or manner of the particular religions did not communicate the value that is present in religious belief.

The findings of this study suggest that some suicidal persons do not find symbolic actions or abstract doctrines to be helpful to him. He does not find prayer meaningful; forgiveness is a difficult concept for him; he does not depend on God or any "beneficent possession"; nor can he be satisfied with long range rewards for present day sufferings. He has little faith in a cosmic "unseen order." Sunday school and church services appear to have little effect. Efforts at preaching, administering the sacraments, leading in prayer, teaching doctrine, offering words of forgiveness, exhortation to put one's life in the hands of God, will have little positive effect.

On the other hand, the suicidal person is interested in religion, and he expresses the hope that religion should be able to help him in some way.

Dr. Howard J. Clinebell makes the point that religion can be "a constructive, creative, healing, life-affirming force, or a dark, repressive, life crippling force."⁴ He offers twelve criteria by which he seeks to distinguish mentally healthy religion from mentally unhealthy religion. These criteria afford a good structure by which we can evaluate the religiosity of the suicidal person, and how religion might be employed as an anti-suicidal influence.

1. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice build bridges or barriers between people?

Clinebell describes the effect that religion has on interpersonal relationships as the "acid test" of the religion. Healthy religion will facilitate warm and lasting relationships between people. This study found what other studies of suicide have also discovered, that the suicidal person tends to have great difficulty in his interpersonal relationships. He does not feel a part of any social group, and has great hardship in maintaining close, intimate relationships. For Durkheim, this social involvement was

⁴Howard J. Clinebell, Mental Health Through Christian Community (New York: Abingdon, 1965).

of primary concern in regard to suicidal people. If religion can foster close interpersonal relationships, it can be a major help to the suicidal person.

2. Does a particular form of religious and practice strengthen or weaken a basic sense of trust and relatedness to the universe?

The view of the universe which is presented by the subjects of this study is that it is a cold, indifferent or hostile place which represents no dependable order and includes no Beneficent Being. Most of the major religions of the world would disagree with this view. Christianity and Judaism, for example, stress the viewpoint that God created the world, and it is a good place, providing amply for all the needs of man. It offers a law abiding, orderly structure both physically and morally. Although God is sometimes a stern judge, he is also a loving father who is of great help in times of stress, and he can be depended upon to help his people. The oriental religions conceive of God more impersonally, but they too consider the universe as an orderly place.

Feelings of isolation, helplessness and hopelessness are commonly associated with a tendency toward suicide, and if the suicidal person can come to accept the universe as a place of warmth and order -- a trustworthy place -- he would be better able to cope with his negative feelings. If religion can strengthen a person's sense of basic trust,

it can make a valuable contribution to suicide prevention activities.

3. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice stimulate or hamper the growth of inner freedom and personal responsibility?

The question relates to the problem of dependency.

The suicidal persons who were studied in this project exhibited great dependency needs. They felt little inner freedom, and they appeared incapable of accepting responsibility for their own lives. They either expected too much of themselves or too little, and none had been able to solve the problem of authority either in relation to God or to other authority figures.

4. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice provide effective or faulty means of helping persons move from a sense of guilt to forgiveness?

Again the subjects of this study evidence great difficulty in this area. They felt that they were being severely judged by harsh and inflexible standards, and forgiveness is an almost impossible concept to them. Most religions, in their own way, attempt to deal creatively with the problem of guilt. "The wages of sin are death," says St. Paul, but Christianity and Judaism offer alternative ways of handling guilt. Repentance, sacrifice, supplication, vicarious suffering, expiation, forgiveness, rebirth -- all represent religion's attempt to release

man from the need to pay for guilt by death. A mentally healthy religious concept of guilt and forgiveness could make a significant difference in the suicidal persons need to pay for his "sins" with his own life.

5. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice increase or lessen the enjoyment of life? Does it encourage a person to appreciate or depreciate the feeling dimension of life?

The subjects of this study all expressed the desire to lead a life of pleasure. One of their major complaints was that life held no pleasure for them and the pleasure-pain ratio of life is, for them, a major concern. In their search for pleasure they move to alcohol, dope, or deviate sexual experience and then feel cheated when they experience the pain associated with these means. If religion could aid them in experiencing deeper and more satisfying pleasures, life would change its complexion for them.

6. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice handle the vital energies of sex and aggressiveness in constructive or repressive ways?

None of our subjects demonstrated the ability to express their sexuality or their aggressiveness in creative ways. Sexual desire was characteristically repressed or distorted, and aggression was either globalized or turned inward upon themselves.

7. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice encourage the acceptance or denial of reality? Does it foster magical or mature

religious beliefs? Does it encourage intellectual honesty with respect to doubts? Does it oversimplify the human situation or face its tangled complexity?

These suicidal persons consider themselves in close touch with reality, but the reality they face is the reality of pain, loneliness and suffering. They consider unrealistic those who claim to see beauty and pleasure in life. Realism, for them, is pain, and having been unable to escape this reality in any other way they look to suicide as the final denial.

8. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice emphasize love (and growth) or fear?

Not only does the suicidal person experience great difficulty in loving, but offers strong resistance to being loved. Fear and suspicion characterize him far more than love or trust. As we shall point out later, this is one of the factors that make therapy with a suicidal person difficult.

9. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice give its adherents a "frame of orientation and object of devotion" that is adequate in handling existential anxiety constructively?

We have considered in detail earlier the difficulty that the suicidal person has in handling his existential anxiety. Life, to the suicidal person, is unstructured and chaotic. He has been unable to find any meaning and purpose in life for him, and he is aware of his sense of

meaninglessness and purposelessness. He is involved in the search for meaning, and feels that if he could find it, the terrible sufferings which he endures could be tolerated. If religion could help him in this search, it might make a valuable contribution to the struggling soul who seeks his own death partly because he has found no meaning in his life.

10. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice encourage the individual to relate to his unconscious through living symbols?

The suicidal persons whom we studied tended to be literal minded and "realistic." Symbolic representations of truth represented another world for most of them. Their pain was immediate and specific and the relief they sought had to be immediate and specific. Just as the starving person reaches for the bread that is at hand rather than wait for the connoisseur's creation, so these emotionally starved persons find sophisticated symbols meaningless and irrelevant, and they tend to ridicule what appears to them to be a travesty of what they really need.

11. Does a particular form of religious belief and practice accommodate itself to the neurotic patterns of the society or endeavor to change them?

The suicidal person feels himself to be outside the mainstream of society, and feels only a diffuse anger for what society has failed to provide for him. He feels

little responsibility for society.

12. Does a particular form of religious thought and practice strengthen or weaken self-esteem?

If healthy religion could influence the suicidal person in the area of his self esteem, it would be making a vital contribution to suicide prevention. The self esteem of the person who is thinking of suicide is low. He finds little in his life that is of intrinsic value. He judges himself by his performance in a stern way, as if the only way he can justify his existence is to pay his own way. He seldom feels that he does. The thought that his life is "its own excuse for being" is an alien concept to him. He feels basically unworthy to be alive, and must either prove his worth or die. The gift of self esteem would be the pearl of greatest value.

Viewing the religiosity of the suicidal person in terms of these twelve criteria of healthy religion, it becomes more clear how religion can be, in Dr. Clinebell's words, "a dark, repressive, life-crippling force." If the person's high lethality can then be described in terms of unhealthy religious beliefs, the next question is how can healthy religion be used as a resource for the suicidal person?

III. THE RELIGIOUS RESPONSE

Having examined the existing set of religious beliefs by which the suicidal person is conducting his life, the next issue must be the response which religion will make to the suicidal person. To put the question in other words, how can religion be effectively utilized as a resource to prevent suicide?

Elsa Whalley holds that the therapist must steadfastly and directly lead the patient to an affirmative belief in something of value. She believes that this thing of value is Reality which she defines as being, "the process of growth which constitutes the living universe of which we are a part."⁵ She would convince the patient that he suffers from a deadly myopia and he ought to believe in and place a high value on Life.

This study indicates, however, that suicidal patients are not open to be convinced of anything. They will not permit any value structure to be imposed on them. They tend, instead, to react to their own inner world, and are suspicious of any external influences.

We have seen how many of the important religious beliefs appear to be more the product of the home environment than the product of formal religious education. The

⁵Elsa Whalley, "Patient and Therapist Values and the Suicide Threat," Unpublished Manuscript, 1963.

experiences which the child has with his mother and father appear to be closely related to his present attitudes toward God and to the nature of the universe in which he lives. If organized religion is to effect meaningful changes in the belief structure of the suicidal person, it must first take seriously the deep roots of his present operational beliefs.

Religious belief involves the ability of the person to trust, and this appears to be one of the basic difficulties with which the suicidal person has to struggle. To him, the universe cannot be trusted, God cannot be trusted, helping persons cannot be trusted. He cannot even trust himself to continue to want to live.

According to Erikson, the establishment of what he calls Basic Trust is the first task that the child undertakes, and it relates to his conception of the world and of himself.

Basic Trust . . . is an attitude toward oneself and the world derived from the experiences of the first year of life. By "trust" I mean what is commonly implied in reasonable trustfulness as far as others are concerned, and a simple sense of trustworthiness as far as oneself is concerned.⁶

The relationships and experiences that are a part of the first year of life -- particularly the relationship to

⁶Erik H. Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle, (Psychological Issues, no. 1) (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

the mother -- represent the first crucial lessons the child learns about the world and about himself. This first year, Erikson points out, is basically an "incorporative" experience. The child incorporates a variety of experiences through all of his senses. He learns that the world is both trustworthy and untrustworthy, as some of his needs are being met and others are being delayed. He is being cared for enough to permit him to survive in a relatively healthy way, but this survival is marked by frequent frustration and delay.

The lessons that the child learns in this first period of life are important, not only in his basic concept of the outside world, but also in his basic concept of himself:

The general state of trust, furthermore, implies not only that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges; that one is able to consider oneself trustworthy enough so that the provider will not need to be on guard or to leave.⁷

But the problem of Basic Trust is never entirely solved in early childhood. It remains an issue for all men throughout their lives. Later experiences can either enhance or diminish the quality of trust that the infant has received. Erikson sees religion as being one important way in which the basic trust of a person can be reinforced.

⁷Ibid., p. 56.

All religions have in common the periodical childhood surrender to a Provider or providers who dispense earthly fortune as well as spiritual health.⁸

The value of a sustaining religious belief, according to Erikson, should be obvious to everyone who works professionally with people:

The psychopathologist cannot avoid observing that there are millions of people who really cannot afford to be without religion.⁹

These people need the succor and nourishment that religion gives them, the strengthening of their basic trust in the world, in the universe, and in themselves. But religion is not the only source of these benefits.

On the other hand, there are millions who seem to derive faith from other than religious dogmas, that is, from fellowship, productive work, social action, scientific pursuit and artistic creation.¹⁰

Yet, even with this understanding, Erikson stresses:

That religion through the centuries has served to restore a sense of trust at regular intervals in the form of faith while giving tangible form to a sense of evil which it promises to ban.¹¹

If one does not have such a religious faith, he must derive such basic trust from other sources.

Our subjects neither have found religion to supply this human need, nor have they been able to find other sources to enhance their basic trust. They have no sense

⁸Ibid., p. 61.

⁹Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹Ibid.

of strong commitment to any Cause or institution, nor are they able to easily form the deep kind of human relationships that are feeding and sustaining.

We have no specific data concerning the first years of any of our subjects, but we do have information indicating the attitudes of their mothers toward them. All of the mothers, as we have mentioned, had strong negative feelings toward their children as infants. Even allowing for the distortion which we assume to be present in the subjects' perceptions of their own mothers, there is little evidence that their early experiences were satisfying or ego-enhancing.

Even today they remain infants who cannot trust the breast to be a good one. They turn away from it in distrust and then suffer the pains of emotional starvation. They are suicidal because they cannot trust in life and so are cut off from the sources of nourishment that the world offers.

H. C. Rumke also stresses the need of human beings to be able to trust, and he identifies the sense of trust with man's religious intuition. He points out that throughout life there is much more that we do not know than that which we do know. Unless we are able to act on belief, as distinguished from knowledge, we will be paralyzed. It is only when we can act on faith that we can

act at all.

The whole of life is based on a trustful belief. Without belief and faith in this general sense, life would be quite impossible. When we try to take our bearings in the outside world, in relation to people, to things, to the earth and the universe, and nолens volens, build up from it, be it ever such a vague idea, we realize what an infinitesimal sum of objective knowledge covers an abysmal ignorance, in which, nevertheless, we move about and find our way with remarkable certainty, thanks to our trust and belief.¹²

The arrestment in the ability to trust is reflected in the suicidal persons conceptions about the world, God, and other persons. If religion is to be offered as a help to the suicidal person, it must address itself to the individuals capacity of trusting. To demand belief in certain convictions which the specific religion holds--for example, belief in a loving God, or belief in Reality--is to deny the basic problem and so to reject the individual.

Instead religion must address itself to the task of nurturing the sense of trustfulness within the suicidal person, demonstrating to him that there are some things in life which can be trusted.

If the clergyman is one who had dealt with the suicidal person during the time of his crisis, he is in a strong position to continue in a long term therapeutic relationship. If the clergyman is willing to do this, he will be imbued with magical powers by the patient. He will

¹²H. C. Rumke, The Psychology of Unbelief.

be seen as being an all-wise, all-powerful figure. If the transference does develop in this way, the suicidal persons dependency problem will become manifest, and he may want his minister to make all sorts of decisions for him. He will attempt to lean heavily on the clergyman, as if he is testing to see if this man can really be trusted. He will be recreating in this relationship his early family situation. He will be seeking to find, if he can, even at this late age, some way to learn to trust, and he can do it only if he finds someone who is trustworthy. Will he receive now, from this man who saved him from death, the care and concern that he did not experience from those who first gave him life?

Another way in which to conceptualize the need of a suicidal person is in terms of his need for recognition, the need to have a recognizing face close to his own. The will to live, or the belief that life is worth living is not implicit in the fact that one has been born. The affirmation of one's existence--the feeling of being recognized which is so important to our own identity--is not a function that anyone can perform for himself. It must be performed for him by others. In this connection, Erikson says:

The self-images cultivated during all the childhood stages thus gradually prepare the sense of identity, beginning with that earliest mutual recognition of and

by another face which the ethologists have made us look for in our human beginnings. Their findings, properly transposed into the human condition, may throw new light on the identity-giving power of the eyes and the face which first "recognize" you (give you your first Ansehen), and new light also on the infantile origin of the dreaded estrangement, the "loss of face."¹³

The suicidal person lives an estranged life, a life that has not been recognized by someone outside of himself and larger than himself. He has not been told, in effect, "I recognize you for who you are--a living person who is essentially alive." In the cases of our subjects, they all had at least one parent who denied the child this unqualified recognition and affirmation. The sources of their lives failed to affirm their lives and endorse them. This primary parental effect was so strong that even though three of our subjects were exposed to the teachings of the Church, the basic message that "God affirms your existence" never got through. They feel that they are trespassers in the land of the living, they have never been convincingly told that they belong alive, that this is their right and their essence. They stand before Life like a guest who waits for the acknowledgment of the host that he is here and welcome. He holds his invitation in hand as he stands at the door, but he cannot comfortably go in and join the

¹³Erik Erikson, "Identity and Uprootedness in Our Time," Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 95.

guests and partake of the feast until the host recognizes him and affirms that he belongs.

Durkheim hinted at this basic need for recognition and affirmation when he laid stress on the importance of a person feeling a part of an integrated society. Society says to its members, "you belong, you have a place, you can live." It is a recognition that it denies to the outsider.

Religion has the tools to provide this basic recognition, and if it uses them wisely, it can speak to the deepest needs of the suicidal person. Certain religious ceremonies such as Baptism and Confirmation and Bar Mitzvah attempt to serve this vital need. In the ceremony, the religious community confronts the fact that the person is alive, and confirms it. The community of God, and God Himself--the Ground of Being--recognize the person, and affirm his identity.

But religion cannot accomplish this quickly or easily. When religion addresses itself to a suicidal person, it must be prepared to take seriously the depth and complexity of the problem, and be ready to minister gently, warmly and persistently.

IV. PRINCIPLES

The effort to derive general principles governing

the effective use of religion as a therapeutic instrument in working with suicidal persons, must, because of the nature of this study, be a tentative venture. There was no attempt made in the course of the research to apply religious belief or practice in a therapeutic way. Nevertheless, on the basis of what was discovered, I feel justified in offering the following preliminary principles as a possible guide for the clergyman who seeks to carry on his ministry with a suicidal person.

1. It is important that the present religious views which are held by the suicidal person be understood and accepted by the would be helper. Many of the belief's which the patient expresses are likely to be in direct contradiction to the beliefs that are held by the clergyman. The suicidal person is apt to passionately deny belief in God, in prayer, in the value of life, in the possibility of any hope. But it is important that the helper be willing and able to understand the present position of the patient, and be able to accept him in his present frame of reference. The patient needs to be recognized for what he is--a person who believes certain things about himself and about life. This need for recognition has been discussed earlier, and must be taken into account if the suicidal person is to be helped.

2. The pastoral counselor may then wish to evaluate

the patients religious beliefs in terms of the twelve tests of healthy religion as they have been put forth by Clinebell. Such an evaluation might not be verbally expressed to the patient, but may serve the counselor by enabling him to structure the needs of the patient, and indicate the direction that therapy might take. The practice of evaluating the patient has been proved to be of great value in working with suicidal patients in crisis at the Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles. It enables the worker to clarify his own mind as to what the problem is, and facilitates the development of a therapeutic plan.

3. The basic relationship which the pastoral counselor should establish with the suicidal patient is essentially a feeding relationship. The counselor must be willing to give to his patient, and at the beginning of the relationship at least, impose very few demands on him. This is not to suggest that the dependency should be encouraged to the point that the patient feels robbed of whatever dignity he has left, but sensitive clinical judgment must be exercised. Most suicidal people have a strong sense of failure and guilt, and the clergyman must be careful in what he expects of the patient.

The counselor-patient relationship, for example should not be dependent on the patients accepting the responsibility for any religious doctrine or practice.

The patient must be left free to accept any such responsibility only when and if he feels comfortable in doing so.

The aim of the therapeutic relationship is the strengthening of the patients sense of Basic Trust. He must begin by seeing the counselor as a person who is willing to give, just as the nursing mother is willing to give asking, for the time, nothing in return. If the patients sense of Basic Trust does begin to develop, the relationship can begin to move to mutuality. But in the beginning, the suicidal person must develop the feeling, that here is one person that he can trust to care, regardless of any religious differences.

4. The Pastoral Counselor should be free to try unorthodox methods with his suicidal patient. Especially for the patient who has had previous exposure to religion, there is prima facie evidence that orthodox methods of religious concern did not work. There is still much to be learned in the treatment of suicidal persons, and the pastoral counselor who is free to try new therapeutic methods may contribute new insights. Robert C. Murphey¹⁴ stresses the observation that suicide is an extreme condition and as such calls for extreme involvement on behalf of the helper. Although I am not endorsing some of his activi-

¹⁴Robert C. Murphey, "Office Psychotherapy with Suicidal Patients," Voices, I:1 (Fall 1965), 122.

ties, such as physically holding the patient, the need for some unorthodox therapeutic involvement of the helper may prove to be effective in suicidal situations. For example, the pastoral counselor may be able to mobilize his own church to provide needed support and encouragement to a suicidal person.

5. Once the therapy plan has been devised, the pastoral counselor may have to offer gentle yet persistent support for his patient to continue working. If, for example, the decision is made that the patient could be helped by involvement in some group, the counselor should be ready to handle the resistance that most suicidal persons exhibit to any long term, intimate relationships. From time to time during the course of the relationship, the patient will express feelings of failure and hopelessness. The counselor at these times will need to play a supportive role. Just as a young child learning to walk needs courage to try again after a fall, so the suicidal patient will need courage to continue trying to re-establish himself after he suffers some failures in life. The counselor must be ready to supply the courage and the encouragement that the patient cannot muster himself.

6. The pastoral counselor must recognize that in working with suicidal persons, he is working with persons whose needs are basic and deep, going back into his

earliest childhood. The counselor must be willing to demonstrate great patience, recognizing that such basic needs are not easily or quickly resolved.

V. THE ROLE OF THE PASTORAL COUNSELOR

If it is true that these suicidal persons represent a religious as well as a psychological problem, the pastoral counselor should be able to play a valuable and unique role. We now turn once again to each of our five subjects in an effort to determine what contribution the pastoral counselor might make in terms of their individual needs.

Nancy

When we talked with Nancy, we saw her in terms of her need for a good father who would sustain her as she walked through the valley of the shadow of death. We wondered at the time where she would find this father who could give her the will and the permission to live. In the months following the interviews, she continued to work with her therapist at the SPC.

In an attempt to evaluate her progress, we could look to the facts that she is no longer taking dope, that she is doing well at college, but certainly the most eloquent expression of her progress comes from her own pen.

Following are some of her poems that she has written in recent weeks.

I belong to Life
As I am a part of mankind
I am myself
As much as I can find

To My Child Inside

I cannot undo the hurt little one
The things I've done to you inside
I cannot return the lost youth you had
Or make up to you your pride
I lack the power to erase spent tears
Or soothe your sad young heart
All I can do is be good to you now
And give you another start
I know it was hard to live inside
Surrounded by anguish and pain
And that's why you tried to go off to sleep
Because it all seemed so vain
But sweet dear child I love you now
In a strange and strong new way
And I promise you Child of Me Inside
To make you a better day.

The Wishing Well

I threw a penny in a pond
And I wished with all my heart
For one more chance to find my way
To get another start
Now if you don't believe in wishes
Then I feel sorry for you
Because I wished so hard it came to me
And I believe it's true

* * * * *

It's funny how when I felt bad
I knew just how to say it
And now that when I feel good
I don't know how to convey it

* * * * *

The consolation in having a past
Is that hopefully it won't always last

* * * * *

No Turning Back

In all of Life
I was reached by one
So how can I
Now turn and run?

On Morals

My childhood mind
So turned around
Once was lost
And now is found

* * * * *

I have a happiness now
I never had before
And the world is open to me'
Like a bright and shiny door
I have a Library card
With many books to read
I have the birth of knowledge
Although it's just a seed

* * * * *

The mood and quality of the poetry is obviously and dramatically different from that of the earlier months. How are we to account for the change? Perhaps Nancy herself tells us best in yet another poem:

The Giver

There was a man
Of modern scheme
Inside this man
There lived a dream
A dream of life
It's value real
A drive to live
An urge to feel
And so this man
In efforts spent
Sought to find
What life meant

He thought and thought
And studied hard
The truths of life
Letting reason be the guard
And then one day
When Dr. was his name
He ventured out
To catch this dream
To claim his fame
He gave to those
With little hope
The spark of Love
The strength to grope
I call this man
A Life-Maker
He is a Giver
Not a taker

The fantasy father who once beckoned her to death appears now to have been replaced by a father who calls her to life. Although the therapy was conducted in a secular atmosphere and religious vocabulary was not used during the course of therapy, the transformation in Nancy must be deeply appreciated by the theologian as being one which is consistent with his own goals for human life. The poem The Giver was written by Nancy in honor of the therapist,

the man whom she sees as her savior. If certain words of the poem were changed (for example, if "modern" were changed to "ancient"; if "Dr." were changed to "Messiah"), the poem might be read from any pulpit as a religious witness or a modern-day scripture.

Although Nancy herself might not use the vocabulary, she feels redeemed; her experience has been one of salvation brought about by the steady, loving influence of a man. This man may express his own orientation in scientific, even atheistic terms, but the work he does is indistinguishable in content from the work of the Church at its best.

The Christian doctrine of the incarnation can mean nothing other than this, that there are men who are capable and willing to give

to those

with little hope
The spark of love
The strength to grope
I call this man
a Life-Maker
He is a Giver
Not a taker.

At one time Nancy thought it might be necessary for her to have to die for her "sins" in order to be able to enjoy life. She talked of abandoning herself and living the most squalid life possible in the Watts area of Los Angeles. She knew that if she were to do this it would

mean her death, but perhaps this was the only way possible.

We recall her own words:

I sometimes feel like giving in and going down there. Not even starting off where I could and ending up--just going right down to the bottom. Like maybe if I got all the filth and the--maybe if I went all the way down where I didn't care about anything--and just sunk so low, maybe somehow I'd satisfy this thing in me to where all the poison would drain out of me, and some day, if I lived long enough, I'd walk away--just get up and walk out of that and I'd be free--free from all these terrible desires to hurt myself--you understand? If I'd just go along with it and burn it out--like just as if I would drain the blood out of my body with all the poison. You understand? If I'd just go along with it and burn it out, and then just get up and walk away.

But such death proved not to be necessary for Nancy. She found that it was not necessary to suffer death to pay for her sinfulness, that she was acceptable in spite of it.

To see Nancy's therapist as a Christ figure to her may offend some, indeed it may even offend her therapist. But if it is true that "by their fruits you shall know them," we cannot deny that the fruits of this therapeutic relationship are strikingly similar to what the Church traditionally refers to as conversion. Certainly Nancy has experienced a most profound turn about in her view of herself and her destiny.

Harry

The months following the research were not as kind to Harry as they were to Nancy. For a time his life was filled with his work, but gradually he began drinking

again and soon was quietly getting drunk in his own room several nights a week. Along with this, his homosexual desires began to increase and he began making plans with a young man who works in his hotel to go to Hawaii where they could live together without public scandal.

At the same time, his death wishes began to reappear and he started thinking about suicide. He did not want a violent death, he would not shoot himself or jump out of a window, but he was thinking about sleeping pills.

He reported another item of importance. Several months after the therapist at the SPC and he discontinued their regular meetings (although there continued periodic contact on the telephone), Harry underwent an emergency hernia operation. While he was in the hospital, a Roman Catholic priest called upon him and talked with him for over an hour. As a result of this conversation, Harry began attending Confession and Mass on a regular basis. He hoped that this was the beginning of a new and better life. But disillusionment soon followed. God still did not answer his prayers, and he began to see his doubts about God's existence as lack of faith.

With the resurgence of feelings of hopelessness and helplessness and the reappearance of alcoholism, homosexuality and thoughts of suicide, Harry renewed his contact with his therapist at the SPC. This relationship is

for Harry an important one but is a relationship that he must define in his own way. Although he knows the therapist is a clergyman and knows he is free to relate to him as a psychologist if he chooses, he denies both roles and prefers to see his therapist as a "good friend."

Harry's need to deny the pastoral identity of his therapist, and yet to keep a close relationship to his therapist, is instructive. It reflects his need both to kill and to maintain; to kill God and yet have him alive. In his role as a clergyman, the therapist represents both the God upon whom Harry heaps his anger, and the God upon whom Harry needs to rely. He is asking for the privilege which the early Church found so meaningful, to have the opportunity to deny the Son of God and at the same time to have him present. The dependency which Harry would like to experience also results in murderous anger which, if expressed, would leave him no one upon whom to depend.

We saw in an earlier section how Harry resolved his feelings of guilt by holding God responsible for all immorality and having him pay the price of sin. We also saw how this may have resolved his problem of moral anxiety, but this left him alone in an empty and meaningless universe. In his present relationship with his clergyman therapist, Harry is attempting to resolve this problem in a different way. His denial of the professional identity

of his therapist (that of a minister) expresses his need to attack God; his acceptance of his therapist in another role (that of a good and wise friend) expresses his need to have a benevolent, wise and loving friend upon whom he can rely.

The therapeutic role of the pastoral counselor in this case is to permit both the crucifixion of his identity and the resurrection of his concern. Both needs of the patient are important to him, and both must be accepted.

We cannot really say that the pastoral counselor is the only therapist who could function for Harry in this way. Any secular therapist who is capable of handling hostility in his patients in a creative way may serve the same function. But the realistic identity of the therapist as a clergyman seems to us to especially be effective in this case where much of the patient's hostility centers around his early church experience and comes out in such a focused way toward God.

In each therapy hour, the drama is replayed. God is killed; God still lives and loves; the murder is accepted, and forgiveness offered. Harry leaves with a sense of new life, knowing that he will be welcomed back.

The therapeutic goal for this 57 year old man is not insightful healing. The therapist instead offers supportive therapy through which Harry may be saved from suicide and helped to live the most enjoyable and meaningful life

possible.

Carol

In the months following the research project, Carol went through one potentially dangerous situation and then settled down to a more stable life. Presently she is working on a regular basis, and she remains active in a therapy group at the SPC.

Shortly after we stopped seeing her, Carol was faced with the ensuing loss of her therapist who was soon to leave her work to have a baby. Two weeks prior to her therapist's departure, Carol announced that she was leaving the state with her current boyfriend and was going to live with him, hoping someday to be married. Her therapist expressed her troubled feeling regarding this plan. It appeared to be an impulsive decision and the prediction, on the basis of her history, was that the relationship would be shortlived, and when it ended Carol would again become suicidal. Carol, however, remained adamant and dismissed the interpretation that she was reacting to the impending loss of her therapist.

Her plans never materialized, however. The boyfriend evidently changed his mind and left without her. Carol experienced a brief and minor depression but soon made the adjustment to the loss of both her therapist and her boyfriend.

She made the effort to work harder at her profession, moved to new quarters and worked at her Church with renewed interest. The change in her manner and appearance was noticeable and was commented upon in her therapy group. She seemed to have a new lease on life.

Carol attributes much of her improvement to the church. She feels that she is gaining much from listening to the preaching and reading the material which is presented.

Our evaluation of this is in terms of Carols' need for a benevolent authority who is willing to lay down a code of conduct for her. She needs to be taught, by some authority, how to act, how to think, how to live. The directions for living need to be spelled out for her in terms that she can understand and practice. She needs a structure for her life, a source for information, guidance and support. To attempt to work with Carol in a dynamic way, to attempt to help her gain insight, would be inappropriate. She longs for direction, not interpretation.

Once this need has been recognized, a pastoral counselor is in a strong position to carry out the therapeutic program. His identity as a minister places him in the position of an authority, and an authority which Carol respects. If the pastoral counselor can accept to guide her in a non-moralistic way, and is able to give her good

advice in relation to what she can and cannot do, he can be an important constructive influence for her. As it is, Carol has found a man in a pulpit who apparently fills this need in an adequate manner. She has never spoken to him personally but listens attentively every Sunday morning and reads diligently what he has written. He appears to be the benevolent authority whom she missed in her early life but who now offers the grace of the Law.

Betty

After her suicidal crisis, Betty entered therapy with the therapist to whom she was referred by the SPC. She then found a way to finance her return to the college which she had left and is presently resuming work on her degree in English. Her parents continue in their previous attitude of detachment, and she has received no help or encouragement from them. Her therapy has had the immediate effect of supplying support and some stability to her life and has aided her in defining an immediate goal, that of completing her college work. The long-term issues of her self image, the nature of her relationships and her identity problem will require more time to resolve.

As we see her, Betty would benefit most from feeling that she was a member of a family which would accept her in the role of a child, a role she never really had the

opportunity to fulfill. The surrogate family should provide both a mother and a father for her who demand little and are willing to give of themselves. The family should also provide the opportunity for sibling relationships cast in a different mold from the roles her own brothers played. Ideally they should be siblings who are capable of relating to her in a manner other than a dependent one. They should be able to give and receive hostility and interact with her in a free way. Betty may be able to find this environment in group therapy.

For centuries before modern psychology devised the group technique as being a valuable therapeutic tool, the Church was engaging in group work. Wesley's class methods, for example, provided a close knit group built around the concept of an eternally loving and caring father. The group would meet on a regular basis for the purpose of helping one another to grow spiritually. They were a close knit spiritual family which, at its best, provided its members with the support and challenge to meet, in a creative way, their problems in living. Traditionally the Church has used symbols of family relationships to describe the quality of relationship it was seeking to create. God is the father, other members of the community are brother and sister, caring and loving are primary values of the system of relationships.

The pastoral counselor stands in this long tradition and represents the idealized family community. If Betty could find a pastoral counselor who, by virtue of his tradition and professional identity, is involved in the community of the Church and by whose virtue of his psychological training and ability has been able to create within the larger Church community a close, more intimate group which is intent on spiritual and emotional honesty, she would have found an environment which would provide her with a setting in which she could effectively begin to reform her life.

It is this kind of community that Betty needs. She should not be required to make any profession of belief in any creed or in any concept of God. She is not ready to do this. The community must be ready to accept her, in the worlds of the old hymn, "Just as I am." In such an environment, she will best be able to begin her therapeutic work.

This is not to say that secular group therapy would not be effective with Betty. It is rather to stress that Betty's need for a new family context, for a new set of parents who care and a new set of siblings, is a need of which the Church has long been aware. The benefits of such an environment has been rediscovered and well expressed by psychology in recent years. But it is a need which the

Church has been attempting to fill for centuries.

Tom

Tom continues to live the same life as when we talked with him. He is diligent and effective at work during the daytime hours, and at night he enters the world of homosexuality and alcohol. He continues in therapy and has not run into any further trouble with the law.

From the viewpoint of the theologian, Tom seems to be expressing clearly what he wants and needs. God is uninterested in him, he complains, there is no powerful father who will set limits and help him control his own impulses. Because his dark side is out of control, he feels unfit to participate in any civilized community.

Although Tom has investigated many different religious denominations, his major religious interest seems to be directed toward Judaism. This is due in part to the fact that his father was Jewish, but this interest, we feel, has another root as well. The God of the Old Testament is a powerful, law-giving, judgmental God who makes his will known to his people and demands their loyalty and obedience. When this obedience is not forthcoming, he does not hesitate to make his love felt in terms of punishment. He is a God who is characterized by his strength, by his steadfast concern for his people, and by his clear expres-

sion of what is good and what is bad. This is the God of Moses who gives the Law and who rewards faith and punishes sin.

This is the father that Tom never had and for whom he now cries out. He searches for a God whom he cannot con, and who will make his concern felt in strength and in anger.

Gentleness and forgiveness are seen by Tom as a lack of concern. He feels that he deserves punishment, and when the punishment is not forthcoming he is left with the burden of his shame and guilt and cannot bring himself to infect any community with his own filth.

Ideally, we feel Tom might find such a God in the person of a strong Rabbi whose commitment to the Law is matched by his concern for Tom. A Rabbi who can speak with the authority of the ancients and who can make his love felt in judgment. In time, Tom could begin to rely on this strength and could use it to control his dark impulses which now are out of control and which burden him with shame. The Rabbi should be one who could hate the sin while loving the sinner, both feelings being intense and honest.

St. Paul has observed that the Law must come before Grace, and we feel that Tom is a good illustration of what he meant. Tom cannot believe in a father's love that does

not first demand something of him and which does not first take into account what he sees as his sin.

One of the four instances of suicide recounted in the Old Testament is that of Abimelech who directed his servant to kill him after having been mortally wounded by a woman. The shame of being killed by a woman was more than Abimelech could bear. It was not the fear of death that motivated him but the manner of death. If he were to die, it must be at the hands of a man.

It seems to us that Tom is expressing the same desire. It was at the hands of a woman, his mother, that he has been wounded, and how he flees to me. He would rather die at the hands of a judging God than waste away in shame in the incestuous relationship with his mother. He would rather bear the shame of homosexuality than face intimacy with women.

We might even see Tom in terms of an Abimelech Complex, that any fate is better than the shame of death at a woman's hand. Traditionally understood, it is a strong father who prevents the young boy's incestuous relationship with the mother. The father stands in the way, forbids the action and denounces it. Tom is looking for this father who will understand his desires, denounce them as evil, and help him direct his life in acceptable ways. A pastoral counselor who stands in the rabbinic

tradition may have the authority to do this.

Conclusion

Each of our five subjects, then, would bring to the pastoral counselor his own structure of needs. Nancy asks for a loving father who sustains her and gives her the will to live; Harry needs a Christ figure whom he can crucify and yet have resurrected; Carol wants a loving authority who will instruct her on the rules of living; Betty asks for a whole new family structure with parents who care and siblings who are honest; Tom needs a Moses figure who can authoritatively dictate the Law, inflict punishment for infractions, and support him in his struggle with the power of the Woman--his Abimelech Complex.

The pastoral counselor, operating in the context of his professional identity, is in the sound position to offer significant help to each of these suicidal persons. As a figure of authority, the representative of a community, an incarnation of a crucified and resurrected God, he can be a valuable transference object through which the suicidal person can begin to work through his troubles. He is in a position to speak the healing word of God which he hopes, in faith, will so work within the soul of the person who thinks of killing himself that the cry might be a cry of life instead of death.

The first cry of a newborn baby in Chicago or Zamboango, in Amsterdam or Rangoon, has the same pitch and key, each saying, "I am! I have come through! I belong! I am a member of the Family!"

CHAPTER VII

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was designed to be an introductory and exploratory study and is therefore broad in scope. Subsequent research can begin to investigate more narrow and specific topics. Some suggestions for areas of later research follow.

1. This study inquired into the religiosity of suicidal persons; a later study might be made into self destructiveness of persons who identify themselves as being religious.

2. The attitudes and practices of clergyman in regard to suicide and suicide prevention would be a research project that would serve to specify what current religious resources are being applied to suicide prevention.

3. A study along similar lines as this one might be undertaken with extensive use of standardized tests as a major research instrument. The focus of such a study would differ from this one in that it would emphasize statistically verifiable nomothetic findings. The questionnaire used in this study might be modified, verified, and used in a scientifically selected sample.

4. Historically the Church has condemned suicide as being a sin. A study might be devised to attempt to evaluate this stand as a means of suicide prevention.

5. Research into the possible effect of a belief in life after death on suicidal persons would offer a valuable contribution.

6. A statistical survey of the formal religious affiliation of suicides in a five-or ten-year period, supplemented by a selected number of psychological autopsies might help to disclose the effect of religious belief on suicide.

7. A study into the role of religion as a source of support in the surviving families of suicides would make an important contribution.

8. An intensive study of the variants and the effect of belief in God found in suicidal persons as compared to such belief in a control group might provide important information.

9. A study into the effects of the various forms of religious counseling and ministry to suicidal persons would be another important area of research.

10. A study might profitably be made into the possible differences in suicidal persons who appeal for help to religious counseling centers and to clergymen, as compared to those who appeal for help to secular agencies.

11. The use of projective tests with suicidal persons might provide some important information in regard to their religiosity.

Any of the findings which this study has suggested would provide a topic for further research for the purpose of testing the statistical reliability of these findings. How much of what we know about these subjects holds true for a larger population of suicidal persons?

APPENDIX

1. Age: _____
2. Sex: M F
3. Marital Status: Single Married Separated Divorced
 Widow
4. I am presently a member of a religious organization:
 Yes No
5. The members of the family with whom I lived as a child
(Ages 0-12) included:
____ Mother ____ Brothers ____ Others ____ Father ____ Sisters
6. The more religious parent in my home was my
 ____ Mother ____ Father
7. The parent who most influenced my religious beliefs was:
 ____ Mother ____ Father
8. I feel that presently I am (more)(less) religious than
I was as a child.
9. Throughout my life I have changed my religious affilia-
tion _____ times.
10. During the last two years, I have attended religious
services:
 a. Frequently b. Often c. Sometimes
 d. Seldom e. Never
11. During the last two years I have prayed:
 a. Frequently b. Often c. Sometimes
 d. Seldom e. Never
12. During the last two years, I have found myself think-
ing about religious topics:
 a. Frequently b. Often c. Sometimes
 d. Seldom e. Never

Circle the letter that represents the best answer to each question.

All of the questions in this section refer to the time of your life between the ages of 0 and 12, and to the family with whom you were living during this period.

- | | Frequently
A | Often
B | Sometimes
C | Seldom
D | Never
E |
|---|-----------------|------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. As a child I attended a formal religious organization such as a church | A | B | C | D | E |
| 2. Religion was taught or discussed at home | A | B | C | D | E |
| 3. My mother attended religious services | A | B | C | D | E |
| 4. My father attended religious services | A | B | C | D | E |
| 5. We attended religious services as a family | A | B | C | D | E |
| 6. We prayed, or said grace, at mealtime | A | B | C | D | E |
| 7. We had family prayers at times other than at meals (such as bedtime) | A | B | C | D | E |
| 8. In times of crisis (such as a death or a serious illness) prayer was a family resource | A | B | C | D | E |
| 9. I prayed by myself as a child | A | B | C | D | E |
| 10. The Bible was read in my family | A | B | C | D | E |
| 11. The religious significance of holidays (Christmas, Yon Kippur) was stressed | A | B | C | D | E |
| 12. The threat of God's punishment was used by my elders to enforce discipline | A | B | C | D | E |
| 13. Religious teaching was used to describe or explain the fact of death | A | B | C | D | E |

Rate the following statements according to the intensity of feeling you have. Circle the letter that represents the best answer.

	Very much A	A Lot B	Some C	A Little D	Not at All E
1. I am afraid to die	A	B	C	D	E
2. I feel a need for God's forgiveness	A	B	C	D	E
3. The Church is important to me	A	B	C	D	E
4. The sacraments are meaningful to me	A	B	C	D	E
5. I have had some religious experiences which are important to me	A	B	C	D	E
6. The ritual of the Church is beautiful	A	B	C	D	E
7. I have a sense of meaning in my life	A	B	C	D	E
8. I experience a feeling of awe when I confront something I don't understand	A	B	C	D	E
9. Sometimes I have felt the presence of God	A	B	C	D	E
10. Things I do not understand frighten me	A	B	C	D	E
11. When I am depressed I turn to God and am comforted	A	B	C	D	E
12. I feel that it is important for me to live by a standard of values	A	B	C	D	E
13. I have a clear concept of what is important to me	A	B	C	D	E
14. I sometimes feel uncomfortable in the presence of a clergyman	A	B	C	D	E
15. In times of stress I have felt comforted by a clergyman	A	B	C	D	E
16. I feel that I have been guided by God in some of my problems and decisions	A	B	C	D	E
17. Sometimes I feel a strong sense of sinfulness	A	B	C	D	E
18. Bible reading is important to me	A	B	C	D	E
19. There is some life after death for me	A	B	C	D	E
20. When I pray, I feel as though God hears	A	B	C	D	E

Rate the following statements according to the strength of your agreement or disagreement with them. Circle the letter that represents the best answer.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	A	B	C	D	E
1. It helps people who have passed on to pray for them	A	B	C	D	E
2. I believe that after death we still live in some form	A	B	C	D	E
3. After death, I believe that I will maintain my conscious identity	A	B	C	D	E
4. After death my physical body will be resurrected	A	B	C	D	E
5. I will receive reward or punishment after death according to the way I have lived this life	A	B	C	D	E
6. After death I will be re-united with loved ones who have passed on	A	B	C	D	E
7. Suicide is morally wrong	A	B	C	D	E
8. God answers prayer	A	B	C	D	E
9. I believe that my life has meaning	A	B	C	D	E
10. I know the meaning of my life	A	B	C	D	E
11. The meaning of my life has to do with God's purpose	A	B	C	D	E
12. God has a purpose for everything that happens	A	B	C	D	E
13. The universe is essentially meaningless	A	B	C	D	E
14. God has told us much of his Purpose	A	B	C	D	E
15. I believe Science is the most important single source to reveal life's meaning	A	B	C	D	E
16. I believe in God as a Person	A	B	C	D	E
17. I believe in God as an impersonal system of natural order and law	A	B	C	D	E

- | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Uncertain | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|
| 18. I believe "God" is merely a creation of the human mind | A | B | C | D | E |
| 19. Religious people tend to be better than non-religious people | A | B | C | D | E |
| 20. If I could live my life over again, I know what changes I would make | A | B | C | D | E |
| 21. Nothing is worth dying for | A | B | C | D | E |
| 22. In my own terms, I consider myself to be a religious person | A | B | C | D | E |
| 23. At the present time, I feel that the chances of my actually killing myself in the near future are: | | | | | |
| a. entirely absent | | b. very low | | c. low | |
| d. low-medium | | | | e. about even | |
| f. high medium | | | | g. high | |
| h. very high | | | | i. extra high | |
| 24. At the time in my life when I was most suicidal, I feel that the chances of my actually killing myself were: | | | | | |
| a. entirely absent | | b. very low | | | |
| c. low | | d. low medium | | | |
| e. about even | | f. high medium | | | |
| g. high | | h. very high | | | |
| i. extra high | | | | | |

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

- Action For Mental Health. New York: Basic Books, 1961.
- Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics. Great Books of the Western World, Vol. 9; Chicago: 1952.
- St. Augustine. City of God. New York: Modern Library, 1950.
- Bertrand, Louis. Traite du Suicide, Considere dans ses Rapports Avec La Philosophie, La Theologie, La Medicine, et La Jurisprudence. Paris: J. B. Bailliere, 1857.
- Bosselman, Beulah Chamberlain. Self Destruction. Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1958.
- Brown, Norman O. Life Against Death. New York: Vintage Books, 1959.
- Breed, Warren. "Suicide and Loss in Social Interaction," Essays in Self Destruction. (Not yet published.)
- Cannell, Charles F. and Kahn, Robert L. "The Collection of Data by Interviewing," Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences. Edited by Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz. New York: Dryden Press, 1953.
- Choron, Jacques. Death and Western Thought. New York: Collier, 1963.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. Tusculanarum Disputationum. Trans. Charles Anthon. New York: Harper, 1867.
- Clinebell, Howard J. Mental Health Through Christian Community. New York: Abingdon Press, 1964.
- Donne, John. Biathanatos. New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930.
- Dublin, Louis and Bessie Bunzel. To Be or Not to Be. New York: Smith and Hass, 1933.
- Dublin, Louis. Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study. New York: Ronald Press, 1963.

- Durkheim, Emile. Le Suicide: Etude de Socilogie. Trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951.
- Erikson, Erik. Identity and the Life Cycle. (Psychological Issues.) New York: International Universities Press, 1959.
- _____. Insight and Responsibility. New York: Norton, 1964.
- Esquival, Jean. Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity. Trans. E. K. Hunt. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1838.
- Farberow, Norman and Edwin Shneidman. The Cry for Help. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961.
- Fedden, Henry Romilly. Suicide, A Social and Historical Study. London: Peter Davies, 1938.
- Feifel, Herman (ed.). The Meaning of Death. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959.
- Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and its Discontents. New York: Norton, 1961.
- _____. Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works. 24 vols. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-65.
- vol. 9 "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices."
- vol. 14 "Mourning and Melancholia."
- vol. 17 "Contributions to a Discussion on Suicide."
- vol. 23 "An Outline of Psychoanalysis."
- _____. Beyond the Pleasure Principle. New York: Bantam Books, 1959.
- Fenichel, Otto. The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis. New York: Norton, 1945.
- Gibbs, Jack. "Suicide," Contemporary Social Problems. Edited by Robert K. Merton and Robert A. Nisbet. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. Poetry and Truth. Trans. Minna Steel Smith. London: Bell & Sons, 1954.

- Henry, Andrew F. and James F. Short. Suicide and Homocide. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954.
- Hillman, James. Suicide and the Soul. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.
- Homer. The Odyssey. Great Books of the Western World, Vol. 4; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952.
- Hume, David. An Essay on Suicide. Yellow Springs, Ohio: Kahoe, 1929.
- James, William. "Is Life Worth Living?" The Will to Believe. New York: Longmans Green, 1904.
- Kant, Immanuel. The Metaphysics of Ethics. Trans. J. W. Semple. Edinburgh: Clark, 1871.
- Kluckhohn, Clyde and Henry A. Murray. "Personality Formation: The Determinants," Personality in Nature, Society and Culture. Edited by David Schneider. New York: Knopf, 1962.
- Kobler, Arthur L. and Ezra Stotland. The End of Hope. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1964.
- Litman, Robert E. "Sigmund Freud on Suicide," Essays in Self Destruction. (Not yet published.)
- Lisle, Claude. Du Suicide, Statistique, Medicine, Histoire et Legislation. Paris: J. B. Bailliere, 1856.
- Legoyt, Alfred. Le Suicide Ancient et Moderne. Paris: A. Drozin, 1887.
- Meerlo, Joost. Suicide and Mass Suicide. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1962.
- Menninger, Karl. Love Against Hate. New York: Harvest Books, 1952.
- _____. Man Against Himself. New York: Harvest Books, 1938.
- Montesquieu, Charles. Persian Letters. Trans. John Davidson. London: Routledge, 1901.
- Morris, Charles. Paths of Life. New York: Harper & Bros., 1942.

- Morselli, H. Suicide, An Essay on Comparative Moral Statistics. New York: Appleton, 1882.
- Murray, Henry A. and Christiana D. Morgan. "A Clinical Study of Sentiments," Genetic Psychology Monographs. XXXII (1945), 1-149.
- Neill, Stephen. Christian Holiness. New York: Harper & Bros., 1960.
- O'Dea, James. Suicide: Studies on Its Philosophy. New York: G. O. Putnam's Sons, 1882.
- Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. Oxford: University Press, 1931.
- Parad, Howard J. (ed.). Crisis Intervention. New York: Family Service, 1965.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. The Shape of Death. New York: Abingdon Press, 1961.
- Pepper, Stephen. "Can a Philosophy Make One Philosophical?" Essays in Self Destruction. (Not yet published.)
- Plato. On Laws. Great Books of the Western World, vol. 7; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952.
- _____. Phaedo. Great Books of the Western World, vol. 7; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952.
- Rumke, H. C. The Psychology of Unbelief. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962.
- Sarason, I. G. Contemporary Research in Personality. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. The World as Will and Idea. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1907.
- Shneidman, Edwain S. and Norman Farberow. Clues to Suicide. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957.
- Stengel, Erwin. Suicide and Attempted Suicide. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964.
- Strahan, Samuel. Suicide and Insanity. London: Sonnenschein, 1893.

- St. Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologica. Great Books of the Western World, vol. 20; Chicago: Encyclop aedia Britannica, 1952.
- Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63.
- _____. The Courage to Be. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.
- Varah, Chad (ed.). The Samaritans. London: Constable, 1965.
- Wesley, John. Works. 24 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1872.
- White, Robert W. The Study of Lives. New York: Atherton Press, 1963.
- Winslow, Forbes. The Anatomy of Suicide. London: Renshaw, 1840.

B. JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Boisen, A., R. L. Jenkins, and M. Lorr. "Schizophrenia as a Striving Toward the Solution of Conflict," Journal of Clinical Psychology, X (1954), 389-91.
- Brill, A. A. "The Concept of Psychic Suicide," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XX (1939), 246.
- Clark, L. Pierce. "A Study of the Unconscious Motivations in Suicides," New York Medical Journal, IV (September 6, 1922), 254.
- Cline, Victor B. and James M. Richards. "A Factor Study of Religious Belief," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, I (1965), 569-578.
- Farberow, Norman and Edwin Shneidman. "A Study of Attempted, Threatened and Completed Suicide," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LII (1955), 230.
- Friedlander, Kate. "On the Longing to Die," International Journal of Psychology, XXI (1940), 416.
- Fisch, Mayer. "The Suicidal Gesture," American Journal of Psychology, CXI (1954), 33.

- Glock, Charles and Rodney Stark. "Is There an American Protestantism?" Transaction, III:1 (November-December, 1965), 8.
- Grollman, Earl A. "A Pastoral Counseling of the Potential Suicidal Person," Pastoral Psychology, XVI:160 (January 1966), 18.
- Grotjahn, Martin. "Ego Identity and the Fear of Death and Dying," Journal of the Hillside Hospital, IX, (July 1960), 3.
- Heilig, Mickey and Norman Farberow. "Manual for Clinical Associates," (not yet published).
- Hendin, Herbert. "Attempted Suicide: A Psychiatric and Statistical Study," Psychiatric Quarterly, XXIV (1950), 39.
- Henrick, Ives. "Suicide as Wish Fulfillment," Psychiatric Quarterly, XIV (1940), 30.
- Jackson, Don. "Suicide," Scientific American, CXCI (1954), 88-96.
- Litman, Robert E. "Emergency Response to Potential Suicide," Journal of the Michigan State Medical Society, LXII (1963), 68-72.
- Mason, P. "Suicide in Adolescents," Psychoanalytic Review, XLI (1954), 48-50.
- Muller, Josine. "Atheism in Childhood and Faulty Character," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, VIII (1927), 521.
- Murphy, Robert C. "Office Psychotherapy with Suicidal Patients," Voices, I:1 (Fall 1965), 122.
- Oliven, John F. "The Suicidal Risk," New England Journal of Medicine, CCXLV:13 (September 27, 1951), 488.
- Palmer, Dwight M. "Factors in Suicidal Attempts," Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases, XCIV:4 (April 1941), 421-422.
- Read, C. Stanford. "The Problem of Suicide," The British Medical Journal, I (March 28, 1936), 631-634.

- Shneidman, Edwin S. "Some Reflections on Personality Explorers 1938-63," Journal of Projective Techniques and Personality Assessment, XXVIII:2 (1964), 156-60.
- Sifneos, Peter E. and William F. McCourt. "Wishes for Life and Death of Some Patients Who Attempt Suicide," Mental Hygiene, XLVI (October 1962), 123-134.
- Tabachnick, Norman. "Counter-Transference in Suicidal Attempts," Archives of General Psychology, IV (June 1961), 258-261.
- Teicher, Joseph. "A Study in Attempted Suicide," Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases, CV:3 (1947), 283.
- Warburg, Bettina. "Suicide, Pregnancy and Rebirth," Psychiatric Quarterly, VIII (1938), 490.
- Whalley, Elsa A. "Patient and Therapist Values and the Suicide Threat," Paper presented before the American Psychological Association, August 29, 1963.
- Zilboorg, Gregory. "Differential Diagnostic Types of Suicide," Archives of Neurology and Psychology, XXXV (February 1936), 270.
- _____. "Suicide Among Civilized and Primitive Races," American Journal of Psychology, XCII:6 (May 1936), 1347.
- _____. "Considerations on Suicide with Particular Reference to that of the Young," American Journal of Orthopsychology, VIII (January 1937), 15.